A Modern Alchemist

And Other Poems by

LEE WILSON DODD

Class PS 35.7

Book .O2.11c

Copyright No. 1906

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

A Modern Alchemist

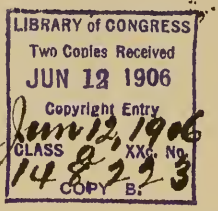
and Other Poems

Lee Wilson Dodd

Boston: Richard G. Badger
The Gorham Press
1906

Copyright 1906 by L. W. Dodd
All Rights Reserved

PS3507
.O2M6
1906



The author wishes to acknowledge the courtesy of the Editors of *The Century, Harper's, Outing, The Metropolitan* and *Life,* in permitting him to include in this volume such of these verses as they have published.

The Gorham Press, Boston, U. S. A.

TO MY FATHER

Contents

	PAGE
To a Possible Reader	7
A Modern Alchemist	8
What the Coroner Found	11
To the Gods of Greece	16
The Goddess	17
To V. V. M. B.	17
Looking Backward	19
A Foot Note to "La Saisiaz"	20
Find Wings!	21
A Modern Dramatic Poet to His Elder Kin	22
Lathos and Elna	24
To the Unknown Mistress	27
The Bullfinch	28
In a Tower Chamber	30
Invocation	32
More Life . . More!	32
The Good Ship "Thistledown"	33
Wayfellows	34
Song	35
Idyl	36
The Judges	37
"The Scab"	39
"I Have Forgotten Tears"	40
The Dreamers	41
The Emissary	42
Salome	44
A Prayer to Death	45
The Two Deaths	46
At the Threshold	47

PAGE
"Peace! Count the Clock!" 48
Challenge! 49
Adonis to Aphrodite 50
Aftermath 51
Ode 53
Beneath Apple Boughs 53
In the Silence 55
The Old Poet to His Soul's Friend..... 56
The Poet 57
A Poet's Prayer 57
A Decadent Poet 57
Ave 58
Insight 58
The Deaf Poet to His Mistress..... 59
To My Mistress . . Poesy..... 59
Love and the Poet 59
The Ne'er-do-Well 60
For One Singing 60
Word Weariness 61
Battery Park 61
Zany-Whiles 65
Lines for a Roumanian Air..... 66
A Nameless Epitaph..... 66
Lines for a Little Drawing..... 67
Audax 67
"Antilha" 67
Irrecoverable 68
Aperto Vivere Voto 69
Matins 69
The Débutante 69
Love's Pilgrimage 70

PAGE

Home 72
Defenceless 72
Waiting 73
Mid-Passion 73
A Last Plea 74
Invocation 74
Gifts 75
Winter Evening — Central Park 75
Isolation 76
Epicurus, His Garden 76
Thales 77
"The Last Token" 77
The Delphic Sybil 78
Giorgione to His Mistress 79
Looking Forward 79
Cypselus 79
Fragment of an "Electra" 82
Necessity 84
Faith 85
St. Bernard's Prayer to the Virgin 85
Landorian 86
Lines 86
Nocturne 87
Art for the Soul's Sake 88
Lost 88
Circe 89
Martha 90
Lines Written on the Fly Leaf of Hæckle's "The Riddle of the Universe" 90
Forgiveness 91
A Word of Protest 93

PAGE

Milicent and Mirabella

Milicent and Mirabella 97

From the Book of Youth

I 117
II Youth's Nocturne 117
III Song 118
IV 119
V Lute Song for — 120
VI Avant Avril 121
VII 122
VIII Oyez! Oyez! 122
IX 123
X 124
XI 125
XII 126
XIII The Immutable 126
XIV Lyric Wayfaring — 127
XV 128
XVI 129
XVII To Phyllis 129
XVIII 131
XIX 132
XX 132
XXI 133
Vale 135

TO A POSSIBLE READER

Friend, if you read, read wisely, nor believe
Grief's name is graven here because I grieve,
Nor when I sing love's passion deem that I
Have felt each worded rapture sigh for sigh!
Life I interpret as I may, but keep
Myself a secret where all secrets sleep.

All men have loved, I fancy, once or twice —
Once were enough a poet to suffice!
All men have sorrowed, have known bitterness —
Were all men poets they could do no less.
My art, you see, is just to take a hint,
Expand, and make it permanent in print.

Read, then, in candor, if you read at all,
Nor pluck my mystery from a rhythmic scrawl;
I would not have you think me all I seem
In these illuding mimicries of dream.
Just take me for the work's sake; if I write
Well — you may praise a little .. Friend, goodnight!

A MODERN ALCHEMIST

No senile relic of old ignorance,
Capped in black velvet, habited in gloom,
White-bearded, marked with moons, and littered round
With mummied store and crooked crucible:
No; but a man alert, though bowed with age,
Close shaven, clean of eye, with flickering hands
Quick to express, if impotent to seize,
The eternal irresistible mystery . . .
Life, and its impulse; death, and its decay.

To play with life!
To take it like a toy in these lean hands,
Shaping it to my whim! .. Were this not worth
Infinite toil and sleep-forgotten hours?
Long have I lived and labored; the secret still
Eludes: what shall it profit me? I grow
Old, and a fever spot burns in each cheek
Like creeping fire in parchment . . .
To play with life!

How the hope glimmers up within my brain!
Into my thought almost the secret springs
Full-flowered .. a barren seedling! . . .
Minikin efts,
Low, spongy growths of the inveterate sea,
Eggs of the urchin, frond, and filmy fin
Winnowing the waters with their light desires . . .
Whence are these things? Wherein resides their power?
What passion animates the speck of form
Safe in its spiny, labyrinthine cave?
What law destroys, what mightier law ensures

Continuance out of change, the will *to be?*
Might I not bring these forth before me . . .
now?
Might I not build them up with cunning care,
Mingling the sudden violent elements
Till the one force that we call Life be freed?
Might I not mould them to some nobler being,
Feed them with alien purposes, and fashion
The outward seeming to the inward urge?
.. Nay! but this were some triumph in a world
Grown old and weary, grown old with questioning,
Weary of seeking answers, to no end.
.. To do this thing, triumph! .. and then to die . . .

Wherefore to die! . . .

Life once within my grasp, might I not snatch
Infinite being from oblivion,
Teach pain forgetfulness, and defying death
Loosen immortal joy throughout the world!
This were some triumph too! . . .
But I am old,
Old and enfeebled, and the secret still
(Though traced even to the final veil, all else
Dissolved and purged away) nimbly escapes,
Mocking my struggle . . .
Younger men shall thrive,
Shall tear the secret from me, and the palm.
And I shall wither and die, having sacrificed
All the swift-footed ecstasy of youth,
Prime's vigor, and the fire-side solaces
Of wife and wondering children, to this one
Desire; slave to my purpose, allured at length
Into a lonely and desolate decay . . .
Having mocked at life, and lost it!

No! Once more!
Once more! . .. .
Too late .. it is too late. Who knows
But that I sought death shall unmask for me?
No .. cruel! no! .. Infinite sleep were best.
For I am tired of truth and would pass on
Into that silence where all truth lies hid,
Into the ultimate silence; or live again
Through delicate forms that question not nor strive,
Ferns, and the April flowers, faultless and frail,
Violets, or fantastic columbine;
All gracious folk who live and love the sun,
And morning dews, and the cool palm of night
Closing their senses up . . .
All intimate folk who live and are content,
Feeling no impulse curse vitality
With the disease of an unending quest,
With the eternal impotence of toil.

.. Too late! It is too late . . .
"To play with life" ..
How vain it seems now that Death touches me
Upon the shoulder, saying .. "Come."
.. I come.

Dearest and Best: — I will not feign a name
To love you by, as lordlier poets use;
I would not fill your ears with needless shame,
Nor offer love your handmaid would refuse.
I write to you because I dream and live . . .
Praying for foolish gifts you may not give.

It is not that I hope through some far chance
To move you with a word's sincerity;
Love who was wakened in me at a glance
Speaks but in broken phrases: "Pity me,"
Masks in a beggar's whine a broken heart;
Love, all a tyrant, leaves no scope for art.

And I am not your equal, scarce your slave
To serve you, since you have forgotten now
The lad you rescued from his sheeted grave,
Laying your palm, gently, upon his brow . . .
O God of Love, what life lives in a touch
To give, unknowing, and to take so much!

You have forgotten. I remember still
Through all the languid hours of all the days
Your step, and how your presence seemed to fill
The room with music and my soul with praise,
The pallid toneless room, wherein I grew
Silent, a thing of shadow . . . lacking you.

There, if I turned my head, the lessening cots
Marked each his burden of unmastered pain;
There crept such stealthy, slow, devouring thoughts
As feed like vampires on the febrile brain;
And there came peace upon me for a while,
Peace, and the patient wonder of a smile.

Peace, for a time; then tyrannous slavery:
That which was tranquil in me turned to love;
And then I called on Death to set me free,
Praying wild prayers you will know nothing of:
But Death was far from me, great Love was lord;
And I, His creature, trembled at a word.

One day you came no more. I guessed the end
Of all my hopes, knowing what hope was dead.
Another duty claimed you for a friend;
Elsewhere you ministered, the nurses said,
While yet I smiled upon them. Was it wise
To smile thus bravely out of paradise?

Ah, was it wise? I know not. Had I but cried
Aloud for you, had I cried out your name
Then, it may be . . . No, no, it is too wide
This chasm betwixt us! . . . Yet, had I striven for fame,
Risen for your sake to fame, coined my rich youth
To serve you . . . Peace: better to serve the truth.

The Truth! Life fashions it as Fate commands: —
Being what I am my love was sacrilege.
Still, still I dream somewhither in far lands,
Passing some temple gate, turning some page,
I shall look up and find you waiting . . . No!
Such dreams are banished many months ago.

For if I love, no less my thought is clear:
And this I know, love fashions not man's fate;
And this I know, having once lost you here
My dreams are powerless. Through the ivory gate
Such phantoms pass to cheat our souls; but I
Found not my future's fabric on the lie.

No: you are you, treading appointed ways,
And I am I. The mean and sordid stairs
That scramble to my attic, the foul haze
Of squalid kitchens, all that drives and dares
Man's soul to batter at the gates of death,
Dispart us. No; we breath no common breath.

But in the silence still I turn to you.
The slender silence; for at last there comes
Even upon this grimy hive a few
Brief hours when the close swarm no longer hums.
O weary, O unprofitable bees,
That you must waken from such hours as these!

Why must you waken to the harsh control
Of hunger and of habit and of crime?
Is there no thought of peace at the world's soul,
No wharfage down the pitiless tide of time?
Must you for ever turn again to win
Life's miserable pittance for your sin?

And I, what rest for me? I need no rest
Who have known love; I need no other thing,
Having of all unconquered things the best,
The power of loving and the will to sing . . .
To sing her praise who touched my heart with song,
Waiting alone — still waiting — ah, how long!

Ever, for ever . . . The hooded hours renew
Their vigil; one, touching my lips, sets free
Words beautiful and terrible and true,
Charged with a sense of alien mystery . . .
Of things which are not, though we feel they are;
Brave singing islands off the outer star!

O eyes that fed in mine the impalpable
Adventurous vision of unfolding love!
O voice more moving than a merman's shell!
O hands of gentle influence! Above
All streams of earthly hope, must not my soul
Flame at your temples like an aureole!

Ay, and what then? O folly, O unrest,
To dream away the laws of all the world . . .
To mould the future to a poet's test,
Scrolling the heavens like a roseleaf curled!
O infinite unquenchable desire . . .
Flame of life's flame, of secret fire, the fire!

. . . *A woman's scream!* My window blind with frost
Shuts out the blackened squalor of the court.
Poor tortured wife, were not your pains well lost
In sleep? . . . *Just God! That instant, sure report . .*
Men calling through the barracks . . one who said
Coarsely above the clamor — "Nell is dead."

Dead — "Nell" is dead; frail siren of the streets,
Love-starved, with lips reddened to summon shame . .

To-morrow's tale is written. Vulturous sheets
  Which lend the fallen miserable fame
Will mark the spot, counting the tale well told.
But "Nell" is dead; poor "Nell" was overbold.

Ah! all my dreams of you are dead .. I must
  Go down to her, Nell, reckless Nell! The girl
Was young for crime and over-young for dust.
  Her pretty hair was tangled curl on curl
Over her head; the shallow little brain
Idles no more; she has forgotten pain.

She has forgotten pain . . . I must go down
  To where she lies, and elbow past the men
Who press about her staring at the gown
  Stained with new blood, go down to her
    . . . and then,
O then perhaps I shall return and know
Why life yields unto death. 'Tis better so.

'Tis better so: death quiets life. This night
  So much the still face of a courtesan
Has taught me, showing strangely calm and
    white
  Under its rouge, peaceful and strangely wan,
As if tired into silence. Death, through her,
Invokes the incense of a worshipper.

And thus I burn due incense . . . . .
                Dearest and Best,
I pass beyond the oblivion of your dreams
Whither, some guess, Love shall make manifest
Love, and unite Hope's tenuous, iterate gleams
For ever . . . beyond the oblivion of your
    thought,
Whither, some guess, oblivion soothes unsought.

TO THE GODS OF GREECE

Why must we turn to you, long-exiled Gods,
Yet turn and worship at dismantled shrines
With other rites than prayer and sacrifice,
And wine poured out and coronals of flowers?
Our land bears not the olive willingly,
Nor do the rough heels of our village girls
Trample the sodden grapes to foaming wine;
There is no august presence on these hills
Of pillared temple and cool portico,
Nor from an hundred pediments of stone
Do you, ye measured Gods, rebuke our toil
With the disdainful silence of repose.

And yet we turn to you, as if indeed
Some quivering Naiad lurked within these streams,
Some frantic Satyr scampered down the glades!
Wearied we turn to you and offer praise
(Not as in Greece men praised you and were glad),
But sadly, without faith, with aching hearts
That fain would know the secret of your calm,
As of a nobler, an austerer kind,
Who dwell above the strangled tide of strife,
Serene, unvexed, severely beautiful,
Holding at heart the certitude of peace.

Thus, now, we turn to you, ye Gods, though now
We deem ye are not, and that life must run
Ever and ever onward as a dream,
Ever and ever onward, and at last
The fever-tide be spent and earth find rest
Implacable and pale like the dumb moon.

THE GODDESS

Only above me the unmeasured arch
Swept with wide-circling stars, below, the plain —
Measureless; and beside me, carved in snow —
The Goddess! . . at her feet I lay as dead.
Her gaze poured round the silence of my swoon
A vaster silence; when she spake, each word
Seemed cut in alabaster to endure.
— But I have long forgot the words she spake . . .
And I have long forgotten how I came
Into that faultless presence. Not suddenly
From the sad agitations of my kind,
Not suddenly, but after arduous toil,
Had I won upward to the gleaming feet,
Won to the faultless presence . . .
Only above
The unmeasured dome of silence, the mute stars;
Below — the plain; beside me, carved in snow —
The Goddess! . . At her feet I fell. And now,
Once more a bond-slave of the alien plain,
What the sure voice spake in my stricken heart
Blurs to the wordless music of the sea.

But I have seen that *Goddess* ere I die!

TO V. V. M. B.

Dear Poet: — We have loved too well
The things of earth to shirk their praise;
Yet have we not twined asphodel
Or won the bays.

Who cares for crowning leaves? Not we.
The busy city hems us in:
We'll tell our tales for two or three
Amid the din.

And if in all a world of men
Are two or three who like our tales,
We'll tell them over once again
Before life fails.

One mutual Mistress we have known,
Served Her according to our best:
Who ask for bread She gives a stone,
Their love to test.

Well, we shall stand the test — be true.
She'll smile upon us now and then;
A smile for me, — a smile for you,
To guide our pen.

A little favor from Her brows
Is worth the tumult of a sphere;
We shall win more than earth allows —
So much is clear.

Then, since we love the earth too well
To shirk the triumph of its praise,
What need of pallid asphodel,
Or paltry bays? . . .

Ours be the wisdom of the strong
Who seeing Her, make known the bliss! —
Building the fabric of their song
To match with this.

Vincent, my friend,
The years offend
With lonely flight, nor will they turn again,
Having too long deferred
The serious-jesting word
Of comrades, cosy once within their cluttered
den . .
Ah, when?

Vincent, not yet
Our hearts forget
The childish rapture, as a shivery pair
We told of elvish hands,
Of fierce marauding bands
Craftily creeping on us in our quiet lair . .
Ah, where?

Vincent, but now
The world's strong vow
(Duty or death) disparts us, and we sigh
To think that nevermore,
It may be, as of yore,
We'll live as neighboring hearts, eye carolling
to eye . .
Why . . why!

A FOOT NOTE TO "LA SAISIAZ"

"He there with the brand flamboyant, broad o'er night's forlorn abyss,
Crowned by prose and verse; and wielding, with Wit's bauble, Learning's rod . . .
Well? Why, he at least believed in Soul, was very sure of God."

He, at least! And we? . . O singer of the soul's transcendent might,
Singer of the quenchless spirit, song-defier of the night,
Thou hast said it, and we honor (even we who dare not glow
With thy soul's divine assurance that the truth of God is *so!*),
Yea, we honor thine undaunted faith in good which *must* endure —
Honor, fain would be thine echo . . We, alas, who are not sure.

Are not sure! We seldom-singers of the Hope that man most needs,
We who have no balms for comfort of the desolate heart that bleeds
Into hungry silence, we who fear not to proclaim the darker close,
Yet fail here in full assurance of implacable repose!

Thou at least couldst leap beyond the maddening torture of the quest,
Thou at least couldst trumpet forth the stirring clarion "Love is best,

"Best because the one eternal, irrepressible force
that strives
"Upward, though the enclosing fleshly clutches
and with death connives!"

We — alas! Our loves are mortal; fleshly —
no! but sadder far
In their infinite wistful partings than libidinous
loves that bar
All life holds of inspiration toward some ulti-
mate righteousness . . .
We — alas! our loves are mortal . . We who
love no good the less
That we deem it time-encircled; we who strive
though strife be vain
Starkly for the sheer perfection few perceive —
and none attain.

Yet, we hail — would fain re-echo to the stars
thy valorous cry,
Singer of the Soul whose infinite passion was not
born to die;
Crowned by prose and verse, we hail thee, urger
of the aspiring clod
Man! . . Ay, thou at least believed in Soul,
wast very sure of God!

FIND WINGS!

Joy after all is best; we grieve
Too easily, we modern folk;
The dreams we cannot now believe,
Ah, let them vanish! Smoke is smoke.

We waste our lives in vain regret
For visions that our fathers knew;
Now it is noon, we must forget
Earth's morning magic. Dew is dew.

Now it is noon! The full-orbed sun
Pours on the earth its fertile rain;
Life in its fulness has begun —
Joy beckons! Shall we skulk with pain,

Hide in dim corners of the past
Like carrion worms that dread the light?
O, let us find new wings! Too fast
We cling to the damp vaults of night!

Find wings! The sun will quicken them,
Will feed them through with strengthening fire,
Will lure them heavenward, will outgem
Their vans beyond the eye's desire.

Find wings — away! The earth shall burn
An intense emerald, the sea
Shall be one sapphire, and return
The sun's superb redundancy.

Life in its noontide ecstasy,
Its shimmering tissue of delight —
O make of it a home! Set free
Your soul from sorrow's cancerous blight!

Your palace waits . . The impassioned air,
The purple splendors of the day: —
Joy, joy is best! O, have a care
Lest noontide fail! . . *Find wings! Away!*

A MODERN DRAMATIC POET TO HIS ELDER KIN

Well, I am man as ye were . . greeting then,
And would to God I might clasp hands with you!
My puny fists within your mightier palms

Might serve at least for jesting. Swords or staves . .
These were your playthings! We have other toys.
Strange how the intenser music of your speech,
Full toned, harmonious, drowns my childish treble!
Nevertheless I call you up by name . .
Brother and brother; bid you welcome, speak
Such frozen words as have been given me
For praise. I mark your wonder. Where (you ask)
Where got yon pigmy fellow his ambition?
Are such our children . . starveling brats? What song
Shall burst from this o'er-dwindled race? . . And yet
We weave more intricate melodies than yours,
Great-chested roisterers! With finer ears
To note the approaching hint of some far flaw,
And shudder toward the pang. Again you stare!
. . Confession now — Yours are the vital voices.
Still they reverberate, still, still are found
To roll a deeper undersong than we
Can mate or master! Yours it was to *sing* . .
Ours to refine your themes and vary them
With iterative ingenuity.
Laugh at us if ye will and must; our heads
Are bowed. The coarser strength that lets you laugh
Bears down our febrile indignation. Triumph!
Still are ye Kings, who rule us from the grave.

Lathos

We are the goal of all this suffering;
We live and we depart . . but to what end?

Elna

If we had loved imperfectly, ah then
I should have fear, and ask as you do . .
whither?

Lathos

Have you no fear?

Elna, *simply*

No fear.

Lathos

Do you not feel
That we must in the pulsing of an hour
Share in oblivion?

Elna

Have we not loved
Perfectly?

Lathos

Elna! . . But have we not known
Perfectly? Have we not with temperate minds
Followed the single impulses of truth . .
And shall we now, being supreme, forget?

Elna

What is it to forget? The second nears
Shall snatch us into chaos! Has the world
Given us birth for this? Out of our love
Is there no flower of permanence?

Lathos

The truth!
I shrink not from the truth! We are the flower,
The ultimate blossom of earth's martyrdom!
Here in this instant of felicity
The purpose is accomplished.

Elna

But for whom?
Why . . whither blown away . . and to what end?

Lathos

Still must you question, Elna?

Elna

Still believe!
Yours are the questions, yours the unvanquished doubt!
And yet I chide you not. To me it seems
We stand for something greater than ourselves:
You for a greater doubt, I for a faith
As great . . never quite fused, yet ever near.

Lathos

Elna, are we not one inseparably
Now?

Elna

— But *forever?*

Lathos

Elna! Give me your hands!
I will not lose you . . say that we are one,
That faith and doubt meet in our love and fuse
Into the one clear *truth* . . .

(*It grows suddenly darker.*)

Elna, *faintly*

The one clear *Truth* . .
(*more faintly*) How dark it grows . . how dark . . .

Lathos

Give me your hands . . . . .

TO THE UNKNOWN MISTRESS

I have not found — nor have I sought for you.
Somewhere you lurk, I doubt not, and my eyes
Will lighten to your glance with young surprise,
  And my heart take the clue.

The clue that leads all men to one sole maid,
The clue that maddens when it does not bless,
The clue to devious hell, or happiness . . .
  I shall not be afraid.

(For I have caught rare gleams from generous
    eyes,
Have heard kind whisperings from prelusive lips,
Have castled Spain, and have awaited ships
  Where hope's horizon dies.)

I shall not be afraid. I dare not seek . . .
You, when you near, will find me at my task;
Will stop perhaps to wonder, or to ask
  A question ere I speak?

For love I know is golden only thus
When irretrievably he steps between
The worker and his work, that subtle screen
  Designed to shelter us.

There if love foots it I must welcome him.
I shall put by all labor when you come,
And say "Behold my bridal gift — the *Sum*,
  Wrought for my lady's whim!"

So may you put your hand in mine. But when
(If ever) your feet would wander from my side,
Sweet, go your ways! Surely the world is wide?
  — I'll to my task again.

Or if I cheat myself, and you evade
My life for ever, passing too swiftly by —
What then? Love never born can never die,
Nor be of death afraid.

Unsought! Unfound! Lo, where I raise my heart
A secret Temple! Pass freely in, if Fate
Beckon . . . There is no warder at the gate!
— It shuts when you depart.

THE BULLFINCH

No, I'll not mock. Tell me again the tale
About your bird. He was a Prince, you say,
Set out from Thessaly with bellying sail
Unto that island of the Extremest Day.
There in a cell carved from a ruby-stone
A prisoned Princess paled and plained alone.

"Where is the lover who will ransom me?
Fair is the lover whom in dreams I see.
Now comes the white-rose to the red-rose tree."

How brave he was, how straight, how debonair,
How the wind sang to him of love and war!
All that a man might dream of he would dare . .
Was not the Princess worth long striving for?
How his eye falconed! how he spurned the West,
Strung to his purpose, vivid to his quest!

Long, long he sailed . . (I hear your voice, I see
Your eyes grown sombre as with inward sight
They follow him from fruitful Thessaly

Down the dim, intricate star-paths of the night) . .
Long, long he sailed; and I too saw his smile,
Shadowed in yours, when first he gained the Isle.

Then to the ruby prison how he toiled!
Over the diamond rocks where sea-things lay,
Searching of claw and tentacle, still foiled
By the keen sword that shore them fast away:
And in the end all dangers dared and past
The fiery dome full-fronted him at last.

But how to win *her?* . . (Ah, your voice again,
Hushed to a sigh with love's sad mystery!) . .
Few could approach so bright it shone, nor then
Could pass the flaming portals, find the key,
Speak the unspoken words! . . Ah, I forget
Love's spell . . Your tone, your triumph inspire me yet!

Was she not glorious for love of him!
Were they not fair . . twin children of the sun!
(And you, your pensive beauty seemed to swim
Into my blood . . "Dearest, what have I done?
Forgive me, love me!" . . Swifter was your flight!)
. . Tell me that story over, dear, to-night.

How came the white-rose Princeling to this form —
A little bullfinch with ensanguined breast?
. . Hark, at the lattice, how the brutal storm
Ramps for an entry to our summer nest!
. . . Tell me that story over, dear; Love seems
More real between us for his gift of dreams.

IN A TOWER CHAMBER

(The Seven Princesses are present, working a tapestry.)

The Princess Rosaline

Love is a tyrant!

The Princess Mirabel

Nay, Love is a child . .

The Princess Cecily

You are a child I think, my Mirabel!
What can you know of Love?

The Princess Mirabel

As much, mayhap,
As you, dear Cecily . .

The Princess Marianne

Hush, sister, Love . .
Love is nor child, nor tyrant, 'tis a toy,
A little idle whistle whereon the lips
Of men and maids pipe gallantly in spring.

The Princess Fiammetta

Love is a flame, say I, no flood can drown;
It feeds on tears as tigers feed on blood:
'Tis mightier . .

The Princess Columbine

Tut! Love's very like a kitten:
Stroke him he's soft and warm and comfortable,
Purrs lazily to show he's innocent,
Is playful, too . .

The Princess Héloise

Enough, poor Columbine,
Your graceful kitten Love is none of mine.
Love shows for me a pair of shadowy wings . .

The Princess Columbine

Is he a bird . . or angel?

The Princess Héloise

Bards and Kings
Have held him for a God! . .

The Princess Marianne

I'll never bow
My head, then . .

The Princess Columbine

Pray, dear sister, tell us how
He won his godship?

The Princess Mirabel

By what trick of art?

The Princess Héloise

His fane he builded in a maiden's heart.

INVOCATION

Spirit of Life! To thee, while yet clear blood
Bounds from my heart with rapture born of youth,
While yet some weft of leaping flame remains
To kindle passion, while as yet my thoughts
Pierce not to cold serenity beyond
The flash of earthly love . . to thee my hymn
Gives praise for intense being, timeless praise!

Spirit of formless gladness, spirit of joy,
Thrilling the Universe as poet's mind
Swift thoughts disclosing beauty! Chainless one,
Chaotic, fetterless, yet closed within
The tingling tip of the least leaf in spring!
Spirit of very madness born of light!
Thou, thou alone art worthy of ultimate praise
Poured out from hearts that feel the throb of things,
The secret pulses, the rhythms of the world!

MORE LIFE . . MORE!

Set me over the main again,
Loose me for China, loose me for France,
Give me to rolic through Spain again
Or ever the years advance!
Or ever the sordid clutch of the years
Tear the leaping heart from my side,
Grant me a gust of laughter and tears,
And the breathing earth for bride!

God of Wanderers! send me the seas,
Blustering blue-throats shagged at the nape;

Shoulder me forth from my prison of ease,
  Spurn me from Cape to Cape!
Lash me onward from Land to Land,
  Star-bronzed, stained with the brine;
With the roofless reach of the Iris-spanned
  Soul's lust, that is . . life! be mine.

THE GOOD SHIP "THISTLEDOWN"

Brave men who cross the sea in ships
  And trail from town to town,
Who weather the world on a hundred trips
From Sandy Hook to Botany Bay,
They only cruise but a little way
  In the wake of the *"Thistledown."*

And life for them is hard and bleak,
  And many's the man must drown;
'Tis a sailor's fate the mad winds shriek
From Sandy Hook to Botany Bay, —
But the breeze holds true and the month is May
  In the wake of the *"Thistledown."*

And the things you see and the things you hear
  Have never a common noun
For name of truth to a traveller's ear
From Sandy Hook to Botany Bay,
When you sail to the Isles of the Far and Fey
  In the good ship *"Thistledown."*

Brave men may cross the sea in ships
  And beat from town to town;
Some weather the world on a hundred trips
From Sandy Hook to Botany Bay;
But few have sundered the singing spray
  At the prow of the *"Thistledown."*

The man who feels that spray on his cheek
  Wears the starlight for a crown;
But the thing he feels he never can speak
From Sandy Hook to Botany Bay,
For he sings to himself in a wildish way,
He sings to himself where the sea-girls play
  Round the good ship *"Thistledown."*

WAYFELLOWS

Do you know the Road to the Other Place,
  The Place that is never Here?
Where life is sped with a finer grace,
  And men never weep, my dear?
Know you that Pathway? I've sought it long . .
But I only travel from Song to Song!

The Road, they say, has never a post
  To point the perilous march;
I've trudged from mountain to marshy coast,
  I've slept 'neath palm tree and larch;
Lonely I've sought it, or plunged in the throng,
As I journey onward from Song to Song.

Is it a shadow trail to the Peaks,
  Rosed with the morning glow?
Surely a Way the whole world seeks
  Somebody, dear, must know?
Surely together we can't go wrong . .
If we only wander from Song to Song!

Dear, what care we for the Other Place,
  The Place that is never Here?
We've the wide, wide ways of the earth to trace
  Through the glow of a golden year!
May our hearts beat time as we stride along
(*Know ye this Pathway?*) from Song to Song!

SONG

Out, out into the night
Under the open sky!
Suck the wind till its cleansing breath
Clears your soulless soul of death,
And makes your languid eye,
Its inner life set free,
Sparkle frostily
With reinspired delight!

Forth to the fiery west
For the hidden wealth of gold!
Fairy lore? you disbelieve?
'Tis the gold shall buy your soul's reprieve!
Renew your faith of old:
Stoutly trudge and lustily
Strive, for rainbow gold may be
A saving lure and quest!

Up to the Milky-way
On a shaft of instant thought!
Bathe in light and purity,
Scorn malign security!
Can delight be bought?
Mount with haste the moonlight stair,
Climb the Princess Sunbeam's hair . .
Spurn the earth away!

Where? in what land? Whether beyond the earth,
Or in some garden-silence, some wilderness
Half-civil, wholly isolated, two —
A man, a woman — met. Regal they were
In bearing; if disdainful at the lips,
Kind in the eyes; their equal speech serene.
The valley where they walked lay wide and fair,
Screened happily by wooded hills, but south
Sinking in gradual blueness to the sea.
A little river watered it and sang
Sweetly along the pleasance of its way,
A lucid rivulet sliding on unsoiled
Over a bed of golden-seeming sand.
Violets grew beside it: asphodels
(If such they were), white flowers too frail for plucking,
Poised like a bubble on the breathing reed: —
Let him who fills the reed with breath, beware!
Lest ere his eyes desire it vanisheth.
Beautiful, beautiful was the day, no sun
Ever filled valley-cup with brighter wine!
Beautiful was the woman, beautiful
In manly mould, the man! All day they moved
Gladly together through their wide domain;
Gladly through flowering fields; gladly at noon
Where wizard oak-trees spread a shadowy lure;
Gladly at evening where the river sang
Hushed vesper music to the virginal stars.
They loved . .
Where? In what secret valley? . .
Peace!
Tacitly thank me for a pictured hope.

Hear, if you must, my dream; dreams are the wild
Unstudied phantoms of a soul oppressed:
Put not your faith in dreams.
I stood condemned
Before an hundred Judges, clad in black,
Whose silvered beards flowed down their breasts like rain.
The room was vast, four-square, and lighted ill
By sudden flames that leaped now here now there,
Lacing the gloom at restless intervals.
Before me kneeled a slave in ebony
With covered face, and in his lifted hand
He grasped an agate cup.
Then, in my dream,
I spoke, and the words issued from my lips
As from another's, for I hearkened them
As they had been another's: but, no less,
The words were mine . . .
"Judges, I am condemned
To die: now if I speak my words shall be
Brief, and if wisdom prompts them, better so.

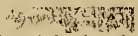
"I am a man, passionate like a man,
Yet firm to purpose good; all men are thus,
Fashioned in some rude way, by some rude hand,
Out of the sullen forces of the world.
And I have lived not always honestly,
Though hating all dishonor; and I have striven
To cleanse my thought, though in the very act
Some foul distemper fastened on my soul.
Good have I done and evil, and have loved
Strong men and clinging women; men whose strength

Impelled me to some valorous deed, and women
Whose weakness often vanquished me through tears.
And one man I have hated with a hate
Pent in the loathliest grotto of my soul;
And I have loved one woman with a love
That conquered in me all abased desires.
Let it suffice that manlike I have lived,
That I have dared to suffer and enjoy,
Nor ever called on death. Yet now I die.

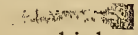
"Think not I cry upon you now for life,
Who never called on death. Such life was mine
As I must wonder at . . so full it seems,
So full of things forgotten. Nor would I now
Bring back the sleeping memories of past days;
For some were bitter sad; and if some hours
Were meted to me for a keener joy
Than now I know, this too I know, that joy
Is brief, and in its briefness lies a pang.

"Therefore I thank you now who have condemned;
Yet not you verily, ye are but forms
Hooded and cloaked about with seeming shade:
But that sole Power I thank which gives us life . .
(A breathing time, a crowded interval
Of strife and fervor amid the changing hours;
An undeterred, incessant masquerade,
A clamor of voices and a whirl of hands!) . .
That Power I thank for life which has been mine;
And now that Power, called by whatever name,
Cried after, sought for, struggled toward, desired

So long . . that Power I thank for seemly
death,
Most just, most seemly, restful, though deferred,
Though whispered of with hushed and pallid lips
That have so often spoken foolishly.



"And now the cup! Who that has lived indeed
Would ask more space for living? . . Is not
Death
Seemly and just, impartial and desired,
When at the last ye Judges name His name?"



. . So, having said, I raised the cup on high,
And all the rondure of its polished shell
Gleamed, and the liquor hissed within like fire!
Then with a cry, I drank . . . and, with a cry,
Leaped into life!

. . Put not your faith in dreams.

"THE SCAB"

A little food, a little fire
For me and mine is my desire;
I am not strong like other men,
But I must do the work of ten,
Hated of all, that I may earn
Shelter, and food, and fire to burn.

Ye strike me down, I rise amain;
Ye chain me, and I break the chain;
There is no power (tho' I am weak)
Can slay me! Nature's voice I speak,
And Nature's lust in me will earn
Shelter, and food, and fire to burn.

"I HAVE FORGOTTEN TEARS" . . .

I have forgotten tears. Long since
The arid courses of my life
Are slag and cinders. If I wince,
It is enough. The sullen strife,
The imperturbable conceit
Of too perturbed humanity,
Have wrought a torpor, cold, complete,
Within: — 'tis not through tears I see.

I see with chill eyes undisturbed
By passion's life-discoloring glass,
Gold-drunken peoples custom curbed,
Pale luxury's obscene morass;
Religion's fervent hands that lift
Heavily Heavenward in gyves;
Art's impotence, and all the drift
And futile stir of human lives.

. . . . . .

These things I see — not these alone.
The pure, grave student I discern,
Careless of fame — a jewelled stone
He will not stoop to overturn;
I see frail women worn with pain,
Whose eyes are gentle, helpful, sure;
I see Truth's shield above the slain
Marked with one flaming word . . *endure!*

Endure! I have forgotten tears: —
We have small time for weeping, we
Who stumble on ere morning clears
And the brave sun o'erleaps the sea!
Small time for tears: — while night and storm
Ring us with horror, down the blast

Leading our broken van, what Form
Gleams — calls (ye hear it?) *"Light . . at last!"*

. . . . . .

What Form? what phantom of desire?
What spectral promiser of good,
Ill seen through mirk as by the fire
Of sapless, long-decaying wood?
What ancient mimicker of hope
Whose sinister miming soothes our fears?
Lo, now it vanishes! — we grope
Blindly. I have forgotten tears.

. . . . . .

Forgotten tears? Ah, love, your hand —
Your hand in mine! I shall not quail
This side the fabled promised land;
The heart you need, dear, dare not fail!
Your hand in mine. I had forgot
So much . . the long gloom disappears.
Yet, yet, ah yet if *you* were not . . .
Live, live! I shall remember tears.

THE DREAMERS

We can know so very little
Of the much there is to know;
Human life's so very brittle,
Human wit so very slow,
That we dreamers deem it better
Just to sit out in the sun,
Undisturbed by law or letter . .
Or the things we might have done.

True, we might have builded bridges,
But the castles that we build
Please us rarely; men and midges
Fill the world, while these are filled
With faint presences of beauty,
Eyed serenely, tender lipped!
Ah, we might have done our duty
Ere love's opiate we sipped!

As it is, we do no murder
Save to fictions of the brain;
And we speak no angry word, nor
Cause the living lively pain:
We are dreamers, star desirers,
Shadows on life's southern wall.
Ye are doers, or admirers!
We are dreamers — that is all.

Chide us — we will sleep the longer;
Praise us — we will sleep no less;
Kill us — is our sleep not stronger
In the grave? No bitterness
Mars our rest. We know but little
Of life's meaning. So we sit
Idly, for life's term is brittle . .
Truth unknown that circles it.

THE EMISSARY

"Vanity, vanity, vanity," I said,
"Always the world and ever vanity."
"Why do you dull your empty eyes on me?"
She cried, "Back to your city of the dead!"

"But not alone," I whispered, "not alone;
"The way is long, and I have need of you."

She laughed aloud, "Not yet, I am not through
"With vanity!" Her laugh was like a groan.

"The way is long," I whispered, "and the leaves
"Bend from me as I pass, O come with me . .
"Leave the sick world's insatiate vanity;
"Alone with loneliness your lover grieves."

She laughed aloud, "No lover now of mine:
"Back to your city of the unrestful dead.
"My love was gay, my lover's lips were red!"
I saw upon her lips the stain of wine.

"The way is long," I whispered, "and the stones
"Creep from the noiseless terror of my feet;
"Come with me, once you found my kisses sweet."
"Back, back!" she pleaded, as the night-wind moans.

On my love's lips I put the kiss of death,
Pale, pale they grew beneath the stains of wine;
On my love's brow I sealed a livid sign,
And she went with me where none travaileth.

"The way is long," she sighed, "but you are near;
"The silly stones creep from our moveless feet,
"The leaves bend from us . . ah, but life was sweet! . .
"Why does the grass sway downward as in fear?"

What dream is this of dusky arms
Circled with cumbrous gold, what dream
Of supple feet no sandal harms?
List! for the cymbals seem
Faint in their silver clashings, thin and faint,
And a low flute afar whispers a dreary plaint.
Yet list! the rhythm deepens . . list! the air
Throbs with a freer music, wild and shrill,
And the lithe, shadowy arms weave to the rhythm's will,
Tossing the clouded hair!
Veil after veil floats from her, gossamer things
Shot through with shimmering amethyst! Loud rings
The canorous chorus . . list! for now she sings
Stark, ancient words of the heart's mad desire!
Her body is a snake, or writhing tongues of fire;
Now a wind-smitten lily, now a pard
Crouching in stealthy malice! Scents of nard,
Burnt, heavy perfumes, sandal-wood and myrrh
Smoke from the brazen braziers, smoke and blur
The senses of a King — her worshipper.
The clamor muffles to a breath, the flute
Sighs for a little . . hush! and now is mute.
Alas, what dream,
What dream is this of luring, dusky arms
Weighted with gold, what perilous, rich dream
Of beauty that alarms
With irrecoverable malignity!
Ay, this is she . .
Salome, daughter of Herodias,
Whose bitter, terrible fame none may surpass,
For it passes not away:
Ay, even to-day

Poets her name repeat!
Nor yet forgotten are those gliding feet,
Nor yet forgotten tho' the world be gray.

A PRAYER TO DEATH

The word is said,
We cannot save her;
The hands that lave her
Cleanse but the dead.

She does not know
The word is spoken;
Lest hearts be broken
'Tis better so.

Delay not, Death!
Strike soon, the sorrow
Is more to-morrow
And tarrieth.

Kill her to-day,
Be kind, O slayer!
We'd not delay her . .
Take her away.

We can but wait.
If Thou let her languish
We wait in anguish . .
Be swift, O Fate!

Be swift, be sure,
With a bright dream take her;
Though a star-song wake her
Our dreams endure:

Bad dreams, till Thou
Sweep all dreams from us,
And overcome us . .
More kind than now.

For she will sleep;
But of her forsaken
We still must waken,
We still must weep.

Take her away,
We'd not delay her;
Be kind, O slayer . .
Kill her to-day.

THE TWO DEATHS

What tawdry image of a fleshless foe
Is this? . . *thou,* Death! Thy form I did not know
In this vile masquerade.
For thou art fair to those who unafraid
Slip out of life to silence, with thy hand
Leading them on to the inviolate strand
Where equally the wise and foolish go.

Appear not so
Death, unto these; but like a pensive boy
With torch reverted, look into their eyes:
That they may see what joy
You bring, and what they lack of joy surmise.

AT THE THRESHOLD

Blue eyes looking at the world,
  Childlike, wondering . .
Is it but a plaything twirled
  By a golden string?

Strange that I could tell you tales
  You would weep to hear . .
Even now your flower face pales,
  Sensitive to fear!

Life, you guess, is not so sweet
  As it seems to be:
Yet with timid eager feet
  Questing wishfully,

Questing after joy, you must
  Seek the secret clue,
Seek it haply in the dust!
  — Will your eyes be blue?

Will they still be blue and fair
  When the world seems gray,
When your heart aches for the prayer
  You have ceased to pray?

Ay, blue as heaven seen through a rift
  Of streaming cloud; but more
Grave, with a more tender lift
  Toward beauty than before.

"PEACE! COUNT THE CLOCK!"

Not yet austerely glad, nor sad,
I count the progress of the sun:
The clock tells *one.*

I am but as a flame, the name
Of constancy not yet my due:
The clock tells *two.*

A little while and I shall hie
Me downward where the slow things be:
The clock tells *three.*

Forget not when I pass the grass
Will wear such greenness known of yore:
The clock tells *four.*

Nor when I am withheld be quelled
By tyranny of love, nor strive —
The clock tells *five.*

Only remember me as he
Who held the truth too great to fix:
The clock tells *six.*

Too great to fix in schools, with rules
Made rigid for a line to heaven:
The clock tells *seven.*

One who was keen as fire to tire
The dogged presence of his fate:
The clock tells *eight.*

Yet one who knew that *first* man's thirst
Is quenched with undiluted wine:
The clock tells *nine.*

That when Time's fingers trace the place,
There is no coward's refuge then:
The clock tells *ten.*

O hands inexorable to spell
One word no mortal hope may leaven —
To tell *eleven!*

O silent hands that sleep yet creep
The dial's round . . Strike to the helve!
The clock tells *twelve!*

CHALLENGE!

If the soul of the world is good,
If the heart of the world is pure,
Sound to the core like seasoned wood . .
Wise, sane, secure: —

Then, tell me, Vapid of Soul,
As you sip your syrupy brew,
How came this clear sweet wine of the bowl
To the languid lips of — *You?*

How comes it that You are blest
With a sense that what *is* is right,
When the fell facts shrink from a strong man's test
Like vipers curling to bite?

If the soul of the world love You,
Give You the wine of its joy —
Then I pray on my knees for cummin and rue,
Lest the stark world prove a toy!

The stark world weary with pain
Has room for love, and for such

As know love best, and are fain
To lean on love as a crutch.

But it has scant room for the fool
Who hears no wail of distress,
While he dreams o'er his face in a silver'd pool
Of mawkish happiness.

Rather give me that man
Who hates the world for its ill,
Than him who can see no flaw in the plan
From *his* inch-wide window sill!

ADONIS TO APHRODITE

Then at the border of the wood, where first
The giant oak trees grapple with the shade
And hold it captive, the boy Adonis turned
And flung back words of shrill unfeigned delight:
And in her bower she heard them . . Aphrodite
Whom all men worship . . all save this peevish boy.

Queen of the Paphian island, Aphrodite,
It is not you I worship! No, proud queen
Of heavy and unrestful hours, and of
Such men as no man reckons honorable!
I will not willingly give praise to you
Whiles the elusive arrowy Artemis
Loosens her hounds and beckons down the glades
And bids me follow! . . .

I am too beautiful? . . .
But the Gods give us beauty as they give
Flowers to the lap of Spring . . a little while;
Only a little while and they depart,

And beauty lingers only a little while.
I shun your kisses, fierce Idalian,
Lest they scorch up the vigor of my youth
And leave me blasted! Shall a boy find ease
Through languorous and insatiable ecstasies
Of love . . or following the shadowy stag,
With the strong-singing wind within his hair?
Henceforth I mock your passion! . . and where
the boar
Bristles with fury in the treacherous brake,
There shall you find me, find me pressing close
With lithe sure limbs strung to a nobler quest
Than subtle-soft and feverous indolence;
Shall find me nor lure me thence, for nevermore
Thrice beautiful Idalian, nevermore
Shall any lure inspire me to your arms.

. . . . . And Aphrodite heard him in her bower,
And beat her breasts, and knew what horrid
chance
Would meet him in the brake, and gave no sign.

AFTERMATH

When Greeks bear gifts, beware!
Ah, had I known
The gentle perfidy of loosened hair,
The cozenage of tone,
I had not now been stripped of youth, and bare
Of honor . . . . and alone.

She came to me like truth,
With open brows,
And the bright candid lips of joyous youth.
The jealous world allows

No unmixed joy: — she came to me, good sooth,
To lighten all my house.

And I was glad of her,
And made her bower
Most like the fane of some proud worshipper
Who kneels to love each hour.
I would not willingly have had her stir
From view, lest some harsh power

Might vex her sweet content: —
O honest fool
Thou couldst not carve for her a continent
Where she alone might rule!
Thou couldst not bind the boisterous element,
Nor put the winds to school.

What didst thou strive for? She
Gave little heed
To thy poor gifts; her valiant vanity
Was of another breed.
Thou canst not, fool, pleasure the restless sea,
Nor plenish all its need!

Peace, she is vanished — peace,
Unquiet heart.
Slave to her beauty, shall not this release
A nobler calm impart?
What though her temples bore a golden fleece,
Late tarnished in the mart!

Bearer of subtle gifts: —
Ah, had I known
The scorpion sting of beauty, and the shifts
Of wheedling sigh and tone,
I had not now sung to a lute, whose rifts
Upbraid her, . . . lost, alone.

ODE

(*Imitated from Olivier de Magny*)

Lest pleasure flee us ere we fly
Beyond the glance of pleasure's eye,
Friends, let us dine in frugal state,
But let our fare be delicate.
And with us let our chums Catullus,
Propertius, Ovid, young Tibullus,
Sit, as if Rome were not a shade,
And sing us the rare songs they made.
And let there be flowers white and red —
Roses and lilies, friends of mine —
And garlands for each singing head,
And honey-hearted wine!
To-morrow death may come and take
The gayest of our troop, and say
"Sweet roisterer 'tis the hour to slake
Your thirst with darker wine . . . Away!"

BENEATH APPLE BOUGHS

I

Cool green and paling blue,
  Leaves patterned on the sky,
Blossoms in pomp of May,
  Stirred as a breeze sifts through
Stealing their souls away.
  Now one by one they fly . .
  Blossom or butterfly? . .
  Showering me as I lie, .
A nympholept of the day.

2

The sloping orchard leads
  Down to the valley fields;
Far hills are faint in the haze
  Of languid light. As I gaze
  The vision wavers and yields
To a flitting dream,
  And I seem to hear
A ripple of voices or else a stream
  That bubbles near.
Then I wake and study the weeds
  A foot from my nose;
    Then I doze
And the ripple of dream succeeds.

3

Bees are busy above me,
  Droning with sleepy toil;
From blossom to blossom, from tree to tree
    They slant:
At my ear a fidgety ant
  Tickles his way till I suddenly foil
His explorations; the sun like oil,
Clear as amber, drips from the leaves.
A riotous bobolink deceives
With a glory of song, as though a dozen
Warbled together, cousin and cousin!

4

Cool green and paling blue,
  Blossoms in pomp of May,
Slow sunlight drizzling through:
  Dreaming the noon away
I smile to the patterned sky;
Blossom — or butterfly? —

Showering me as I lie
With languid vision that yields to a dream
Of liquid voices and laughing stream.

5

To-day I have taken ease —
All the antient liberties —
With my brothers the apple-trees!
  I have felt their sap in my veins;
My thoughts like blossoms have been
Lucidly fair — without sin.
I go home with the evening breeze,
  But the calm of noon remains.

IN THE SILENCE

Here at the hill-top . . rest . . tranquillity.
Hush; do not move; draw deep
This breath of freedom, which is never free,
Because we may not keep
The pureness and the silence and the calm,
The soul-anointing balm
Like to a waking sleep.

O, hush; speak low . .
Linger a moment ere you rise to go.

This moment that is yours, this waif of rest
Quieting now your breast,
Think that it will not follow as you pass
Down to the populous places from the grass
Of this fair slope;
The ever-narrowing scope
Of your calm vision must narrow too this sense
Of world-pervading peace, immutable, immense . .
This harvest-tide of hope.

O, hush; a little longer . . nay, the dream
Mirrored an instant on the moving stream
Of circumstance,
Who shall withhold, restrain?
The unsummoned chance
Who shall recall again?

THE OLD POET TO HIS SOUL'S FRIEND

You, my friend, know that Love alone is wise;
Gladly, O gladly would I place my hand
In yours and feel again the firm caress
Of friendship; gladly would I know your eyes
As once I knew them; gladly from the stress,
The stubborn urge of pitiless circumstance,
Would I win free to meet you where you stand
Apart, and share once more the comfort of your glance.

I may not, though I would. Therefore these lines
Must greet you as my presence. May they seem
At least to speak of me as one who kept
In memory always youth's too frail designs;
Though now age finds me guilty, an adept
Dealing in trickery, in lies . . . Ah, yet
Believe me as I was, believe our dream
Come true, and (dreaming thus) what I have been — forget!

THE POET

The poet's lips are eloquent not long,
But once or twice he stirs our secret tears,
But once or twice lends courage to the strong,
Strength to the weak . . then lightly disappears;
Leaving some little stave of valiant song
To win slow recognition down the years.

A POET'S PRAYER

Three gifts, Apollo, grant to me,
That from the soul's locked harmony
Free song may issue silverly:
An ear to hear, an eye to see,
A still unclouded memory.
So shall my watch-light ever be
Sincere, supreme lucidity.

A DECADENT POET

He plays with words like a voluptuary,
But cares no whit for noble thought or deed;
His only care to trace shy moods that vary
A life made barren by a hopeless creed.
The decent veil of health has fallen long since
From his tired soul's too shameless eidolon;
Naked it stands, but we who view it wince,
So piteous is the shape to look upon . . .
Pallid, inert, stripped of all dignity,
The wan cheeks furrowed by unmanly tears.
Thus does he carve his soul for all to see;
Lifelessly lives; dies — leaving to the years
A chill excrescence of funereal verse,
Like the soiled plumes upon a pauper's hearse.

AVE

Carducci, hail! Hail, pagan poet! None
Has better loved the laughter of the sun,
Has better loved the earth's abundant breast,
Whereon the opulent summers sink to rest
Reluctantly, one after one, and thence
Draw the rich fountains of their opulence!
Your nature is like summer, ample, free
(Hail singer of the heart of Italy!)
From winter's chill secretive sophistry;
Winter, who frights us for a little space
By drawing death's white veil before his face,
Who thwarts the sun with shadow . . . You
are not one
To fret with vapors the impetuous sun!
Life, life's abundance, these you still proclaim:
And life seems lordlier when we name your
name!

INSIGHT

My friend? . . You thought him ever gay,
Radiant, amenable to joy,
An ageless boy,
One who would laugh lest laughter die?
Then you misdeemed him even as I
Misdeemed, who thought him ever gay—

Till, once, our eyes met! In his eyes
Smouldered a passion that was pain;
And once again
Mirth faltered while the back-log burned . . .
I turned to look at him, I turned
And the old pain was in his eyes.

THE DEAF POET TO HIS MISTRESS

I watch your hands move o'er the keys
Each firm lithe finger equal to your will;
And O, my very soul is slave to these,
Slave to a music time shall never kill.

I watch your lips part gently then,
And in my soul I feel an answering tune;
So may some blind sea-farer tremble when
Across his sentient eyelids creeps the moon.

TO MY MISTRESS . . POESY

Just by the sidelong flicker of her eyes
I knew her false, yet how might I withstand, —
Where other men had yielded, brave and wise, —
The pressure of her hand?

Nay, by the palor of her lips I knew
Her doubly false, in that she loved me not;
But when her lips slow murmured "I am true,"
Their warning I forgot.

And now that she has used me as a slave,
Bending my willing service to her will,
As other men have served her, wise and brave,
Know that I serve her still.

LOVE AND THE POET

A maiden loved him, wooed him with her eyes;
He felt their limpid blueness like a dream,
So rhymed of love with a divine surprise!
Love (not the blue-eyed maiden) was his theme.

"O luring lips!" he sang, who knew them not;
"O burning kisses!" But his soul was strong,
Silent, aloof, a sentinel of thought,
Dwelling a hermit on the heights of song.

THE NE'ER-DO-WELL

Behold him sitting idly! One nerveless hand
Dimples the quivering pool; the netted leaves
Weave intricate shadow-magic in the sun —
Fluttering adumbrations, flickering artistry,
Flecking his upturned face with luminous shade.
Behold him sitting idly: but far away
Faint, cloudy summits mystically allure —
Another world, they seem, another star.
And it may be that even now with wings
Of morning radiance he is there, snow-plumed,
Sun-glorified, a free-born of those peaks
Minting the golden silence into song!

. . . Behold him sitting idly; one languid hand
Circles with amethyst the tremulous pool.

FOR ONE SINGING

The faultless oval of your face,
The plaintive beauty of your eyes,
Within whose sad appeal I trace
Passion that sleeps — not dies . . .

These move me, these! O lips too pure
For passion, may your song express
Only unrest a song will cure —
Lest love prove pitiless.

WORD WEARINESS

We men who juggle with our wits find words
Wondrous to wordless men: we phrase all moods,
Easing the world through utterance of its pain,
Its hope, its large forbearance; we are tongues
Given to conscience, we unpack the heart
Of its dull measureless freightage of despair,
Or if love rules it gloriously we chant
Pæans of gladness! We are voices, pipes,
Instruments sighed upon by time and chance —
From age to age articulate messengers.
All this we are, quickened by Destiny —
And much we are not! For the loves we sing
Warm us not; for the wisdom that we speak
Makes us not wise; for all the radiant dreams
We weave are lustreless in our sight! . .
Words, words,
Words only pleasure us, and our pulses chime
Only word-music, and our hearts beat out
Passionate — *words!*

We are sick of *saying!* God, were we dumb, who knows
What solace of tacit feeling might be ours,
What silent homeliness and unlettered peace!

BATTERY PARK

Even from Wall Street one may see
The hopeful spire of Trinity;
And frowning Broadway holds between
Its jaws the fruit of Bowling Green —
A toothsome apple 'tis, I ween!
But pass beyond, a Park invites
To a brief Eden of delights,
Where up a noble bay the sea

Sweeps to the rounded Battery.
. . Now who may loiter here with me
Shall steal an hour right pleasantly!
All troubles here seem far away,
And to-day like yesterday.

1

Spacious? no: nor over shady;
Here the trim "type-writer lady"
Walks at noon this May-time weather —
Sometimes three or four together,
Arm in arm; and here the clerk
Smokes away his morning's work,
Staring with incurious eyes
Down the bay; and here one buys
"Extras," loafing for a "shine,"
With the sun for anodyne.
Troubles here seem far away,
And to-day like yesterday.

2

All the benches fill at noon,
Offering to all the boon
Of a restful snooze: — one sees
Stolid vagrants take their ease
With the golden sun, or trees
Yielding scanty shade. The Pole
Here invites his lonesome soul;
Swarthy men of Sicily
Hold this little Park in fee;
Greek, Norwegian, Irish — all
Elbow here; the squat, the tall,
Spruce or ragged, sick or well,
Drinking deep the fresh, keen smell
From the boon, inflooding sea.
Here at least a man is free
To *delay* his destiny.

3

Out along the bay the ships
Slowly pass, while nearer slips
Snorting tug or ferry by.
Many pastimes lure the eye: —
Yacht and lighter, sail and spar,
Argosies from Malabar,
Rio, Corfù, Halifax —
With their salt-incrusted stacks,
Where the spume of angrier seas
Smote them: from the Hebrides
Came those whitey smudges, or
From the coast of Labrador.
Then across the bay you spy land,
The low hills of Staten Island
Blue with haze; but first you see
The towering torch of Liberty,
With tiny vessels at its base.
Such sights as these have spells to chase
The blackest spectres care can raise.

4

Faces, faces, pass and pass:
Some as if a knotted glass
Had distorted them, and some
Fixed, expressionless and dumb:
Others smiling, here and there
One to make each gazer stare
For its beauty; fewer still
Carved for conquest, power and will
Lining them; but seldom one
Imaging beneath the sun
Any soul-abiding peace.
Faces, faces — let them cease,
Lest the sad incessant stir

Weary out the loiterer: —
Close your eyes for better ease,
Let them cease.

5

Lethal Park, my verses tell
Little of your May-time spell,
Little of your varied sights,
Little of the odd delights
That you offer every day;
Shameless, loafing where Broadway
Cuts between the soaring walls,
And the roar of business falls
Heavily on ears of lead:
Little have my verses said
Of your gracious "drowsyhed."
Verily none other seems
Dedicated so to dreams;
In no other Park are found
Age-long idlers in profound
Somnolescence, breathing clay
Basking in the tide of May,
Mute, oblivious of sound.

6

Basking in the tide of May,
Trouble here seems far away . . .
And to-day like yesterday.

ZANY-WHILES

There's a mad play-house in New York, its name
Is nothing to my purpose: one sees within
A host of quaint unmannered rogueries,
Clowning in colors, and siren women, too,
With bright abbreviations of their dress.
Add to the galimaufry a merry din
Of thoughtless blatant music, that when all's over
Fidgets on nimbly through the mind's unrest,
Till the slow heels go dancing! Odd zany-whiles
I like to wander in an hour or two
And play at make-believe; forget that life
Moves onward with a large reality,
While my freed senses take their fill of folly,
Frisking at topsy-turvy-tickle-toes
Down the whole gamut of inanities!
Of course it's vulgar; but I never feel
Degraded — only gayer, more fantastic,
After an evening with these Fanfreluches.

. . . . . .

The program told me nothing; some tawdry name
There was, of flower and jewel (Beryl Rose)
Such as these stage-girls wear for baser tinsel:
Plain Irish Maggie, as I guessed, her eyes,
Soft meaningless Irish eyes of violet-grey,
Dusky and wonderful. Strange how a face,
Chance seen, will set one dreaming! . . . . .

Without, Broadway
Screams like a slave crushed by the chariot-wheels
Of Time . . . Your pardon, sir! . . . . .
Can this be life? . .
This!

LINES FOR A ROUMANIAN AIR

That you are fond of me is a bitter thing:
The hours of my life are numbered, the hours take wing;
They sweep on invisible plumes to the gulf of the past . .
I could love your love if they did not vanish so fast!

Life is too brief to love in, I must have room
For love — and there is no spaciousness in the tomb;
We must lie alone shut in with earth on our eyes . .
But our souls, you whisper, shall mingle in Paradise!

A NAMELESS EPITAPH

One lies here men did not praise,
One who counted many days:
Pray that death may set him free
From labor's long monotony.

Pray that death no bond may keep
On his ranging soul — save sleep;
If death be sleep, pray that it be
A passionless monotony.

Unsatisfied desire lies hid
Within this tomb: a pyramid
Were fitter monument to cover
Life's truest — life's rejected lover!

LINES FOR A LITTLE DRAWING

(Outlined on the fly-leaf of a "New York Code of Civil Procedure")

Fair face, most like the petals of a rose,
I place you here to lighten this grim book
With the enchantment of a morning look.
The Beauty that abides may you disclose
To some poor lawyer's clerk some future day . .
But tempt him not! or he will pine away,
Seeking you, seeking you, where that River flows
(To which the Stream of Life is but a brook)
Whose Source is nowhere, and whose Sea none knows.

AUDAX

Three things I know, endure!
The uplift of a woman's patient love;
The undefeated Source . .
And eloquent brief verses, such as these.

"ANTILHA"

(. . . probably a compound Portuguese word meaning "opposite island," or "island in the distance," and denoting any land expected to be descried on the horizon.)
The Cambridge Modern History.

From their caravals they sought it,
The dark-browed Portuguese,
And the sure Time-spirit wrought it
Out across the timeless seas . . .

"Antilha," set before them in the West beyond
the verge
Of the undiscerned horizon and the isle-forsaken
surge!

Brutal men they were, these sailors,
But they greatly dared for *this:*
If the hull split, what avail oars?
Find — or perish if you miss
"Antilha!" where the stars go, dim beyond the
beckoning wave: —
They were cruel, these sea-rovers, they were
crafty . . they were brave!

That which lies beyond for ever
Who knows when we shall find,
Pushing our superb endeavor
Down the pathless seas of mind?
"Antilha" . . . blind before us in the West be-
yond the verge
Of the undiscerned horizon and the isle-forsaken
surge!

IRRECOVERABLE

There is one rapture lost from out the earth,
Gone with the golden-wombèd argosies;
Nor shall the ages grant this joy rebirth . . .
To cleave the sun's path o'er *uncharted* seas!

APERTO VIVERE VOTO

Gods! give me these:
A friend to love,
A mistress to be worthy of;
Three or four books of stalwart verse,
Austere and terse;
Sufficient food to mend my body,
A pipe, a fuming glass of toddy!

Gods! give me these, and I will write
An "Ode To Duty" every night.

MATINS

I give thanks for the light of day
And the life of the errant hour;
For a heart unshamed, I pray, —
For a gift of power!
Power to suffer at need
Silently, as is best;
And power to breathe with a zest
('Tis the songless road is long!)
An untamed rapture of song
Through the rifts of a broken reed.

THE DÉBUTANTE

A New York Idyl

Her name's not Amaryllis, though she seems
To shepherd with her eyes a flock of dreams:
And yet, it may be, when their tale is told
(Poor sheep, poor silly dream-sheep pastured far
Along faint hills lit by a maiden star!)
She will desert them for the Fleece of Gold.

Félise, we two, we two and the wide world:
The gusty pleasures of God's cruel sea;
The stainless peaks, silent; the stainless stars,
Silent; the rush of winds o'er barren moors,
Night voices, fen fires, or the lithe unrest
Of stripling cities in unconquered lands;
Or the slow hush of a decaying race
Mured in with the strait walls of yesterday . . .
Félise, we two, we two and the wide world!

Was it not Venice lured us on to love?
Venice, yet dreaming her voluptuous dream,
Prodigal Venice who poured out her gold,
Her pearls — and last her tears. And we twain wept
For Venice fallen, beautiful Venice fallen,
Wept and were comforted . . A touch did all.

Harsh Norway taught us terrors, and our love
Was greater for this awe; trim England gave
Her summer hedgerows and wide peacocked lawns,
Made smooth for feet of noble women dead,
Long dead, where ivied towers rebuke the sun.
England gave peace, and love has need of peace.

America gave power, and love has need
Of power! Home country, home! We welcomed thee,
Felt in our pulses the titanic swirl
Of deep, undisciplined forces, felt the sob
Wrung from a nation's effort, felt the uplift,
The towering uplift of thy wrestling wings!
With thee our love wrought greatly and was glad.

The fronded islands of Pacific seas
Lured us to pensive languors; there our love
Ate of the ancient lotos; we forgot
Time and our homes and the impatient urge
Of labor. There we dreamed such delicate dreams
As only flutter forth beneath far palms,
Beneath slow moons, where the white coral glimmers,
A floor of alabaster, and where the night
Sighs to itself for weariest ecstasy.
Ah, love has need of dreams — such dreams as these!

Félise, we two, we two and the wide world:
Have we not shared the spume of forceful seas,
Shared the still peaks, the crisp, metallic stars;
Shared ribald winds howling along low wastes,
And melancholy treacherous wildernesses;
Shared, too, night's voices and her quivering fires;
Shared the street-glare of cities in young lands;
Shared the sad echoes of dispeopled towns,
Where the hushed plaint is answered by a moan
From shattered hearts and lips invisible:
Have we not shared in all? Our love has need,
Yea, need of all things . . *thus!* . . your hand in mine . . .

Félise, we two, we two and the wide world.

HOME

The Universe is vague, is incomplete;
A waiting void, a loneliness half stirred
To life and fellowship; its pulses beat
Blind rhythms long deferred.

But here, beloved, hid in this sheltered star
We can shut out the inane titanic Whole . . .
Cheek pressed to cheek, what matters it how far
Lost waves through æther roll?

Hand clasped in hand, what matters it that Time
Dooms us with rapt inexorable face,
That when our lips have crumbled, this poor rhyme
The impassioned lips may grace

Of later, lordlier lovers? . . Hush! To-night
Our hearts lie close; we have woven a nest to keep
The blank eyes of the barren vault from sight,
And the moon's frozen sleep.

DEFENCELESS

Last night your fingers touched my hair, your cheek
Drew near, how near to mine! We dared not speak,
Dreaming that love and silence were one bond,
One guard round us for ever, that beyond
The circle of our passionate stillness, death
Wrought largely! . . . O brittle love, death's lightest breath
Were stronger than our silence, stronger far

Than the frail bastions of sad lovers are!
No shield have we from chance and change, no fence
From the sly malice of impermanence.
Last night your kisses drowsed all love's alarms;
To-night, *I fear* — an exile from your arms!
Unspeakably I fear, lest fate devise
Some secret pall to shroud you from my eyes,
To wrap you from me even in death, to take
All things save silence and love's silent ache.

WAITING

But now she dallied by me, arm in arm
With some chance, chin-receded worshipper.
Why is it that I hold my faith in her,
And know among the harmful she takes no harm?
The ball-room flares with light, no luring charm
Numbers me one amid the incessant stir
Of grinning faces, faces which pass and blur
In the intricate dance. Yet feel I no alarm.

She loves me, that is all I care to know.
She loves me, in the dance her thoughts are mine,
Even in the dance. Youth craves felicity
Moving within the music's rhythmic flow;
But O more joy beats in the pulse of me
Than in the music's passionate anodyne!

MID-PASSION

Sweetheart, the love I bear you is not love
Of one unvarying loveliness: your eyes
Are lovelier that the pools of Paradise,
Clear dark unfathomable pools whereof
The praise of angels were not praise enough;

And through your loosened hair enchantment lies
Golden, a lure; and when you speak hate dies
Within ungentle hearts. Your pulseless glove
Shakes me; the scarce heard patter of your feet
Attunes the monotonous rumble of the street;
The breathing of a rose upon your breast
Drugs me to faintness! Ah, even the memory
Of your rich smile renews the god in me,
Making love's immanent godhead manifest!

A LAST PLEA

Dear, if I lose you I shall lose the hope
New risen that valorous manhood may be mine;
I shall not seek excess for anodyne,
Nor to unclean Cimmerian caverns grope —
Caverns of chill dejection. But the scope,
The vision you have found me, the divine
Soul-draught of inspiration's crystalline,
The will to dare immortally, to cope
With the whole pressure of a leaden fate,
To cope and conquer! . . . Ah, losing you I lose
This, where faint life creeps to a shadowy plain.
I shall not know henceforward joy or pain;
I shall not love mine enemy — nor hate;
Death I'll not summon (trust me) — nor refuse.

INVOCATION

Let us be strong in joy, O love! I am sick
Of sadness! Let us spurn this nether star
Back to the void it spawned from! O love, be quick,
Wing with me far from sorrow, O very far
From faces seamed with sorrow as with a scar,
From grievous spirits walled in upon by brick,

Who cling to life as castaways to a spar,
Or as a spark clings to a stifled wick.

O love, let us be strong, let us be strong,
Let not joy flee before us unendingly;
We have been slaves — let us, O love, be free
And make life lovelier with unfettered song!
My sadness, love, shall spire to ecstasy . . .
Be swift, shy wings — O tarry not too long!

GIFTS

You give me beauty, wit, a trustful heart;
  Ah, what have I to give?
Frayed vagrant-trappings fingered in the mart . .
    A sorry counterpart!
      You bid me live,
Saying you love me. Why? . . I dare not ask.
  My life is yours. O, make
Me worthier, Love, for this supremest task . .
    To *live* those gifts I take.

WINTER EVENING — CENTRAL PARK

The pillared elms are black against the sky,
Save where in crotch and knotted bark the snow
Clings; as I turn, a meadow's stainless flow
Of lilac-tempered white sweeps on the eye
To a blurred wreath of shadow-trees, and high
Above jut craggy piles and cut the glow
(How faint!) with bleakest menace . . . ah,
  even so
May giant griefs enround us when we die.

Along the measured Mall in formal row
Sharp lights glint greenly; hurried passers-by

Pad with a cat-like silence down the grove;
The walks are masked and muted. Singly I
Turn westward, telling over ere they go —
Pale saffron, palest primrose, melting mauve . . .

ISOLATION

Thus it is, ever thus; we climb and climb,
Breasting the painful way; our lagging feet
Bleed on the cutting slag, yet life seems sweet
There, on blue peaks, hung far aloft, sublime.
And many strive beside us for a time,
Spurring to emulation, and we meet
Some fallen, and some whose eyes confess defeat,
And some whose eyes tell luridly of crime.

Why count vain years, few, many? The lower slopes
Are timely lost; brave things the stars can teach
Us who have neared them; from our mountain throne
We scan the Universe with chastened hopes.
The little are not lonely, thought must reach
Rare altitudes to know itself alone.

EPICURUS, HIS GARDEN

Ternissa and Leontion, well loved friends,
Here in my quiet garden where cypress trees
Yield muted, delicate music to the breeze,
Here in sequestered peace my wisdom ends.
I have no more to give you; he who sends
A strident voice continually to God
Can ask no more; surely none love the rod
Of torturing desire, calm thought transcends.

The State needs selfless service? Nay, the State
Exists for man; shall man be slave to it?
Philosophy, my friends, forbids no youth
Due service, but if service mar youth's wit
Through strife, disease, distraction, loss of truth,
My garden offers peace . . . perhaps too late.

THALES

Out of the veiled, inviolate South he brings
New doctrine, Thales, the wise Ionian:
"Water is first and shall be last, no man
Lacking it lives; mark how the Sea enrings
The world, how from the wind's impetuous wings
Sweet, far-flung rain freshens a sterile earth!
Womb of the stars and sun, it shapes for birth
The intricate seeming of terrestrial things."

So in the dusk of Europe Thales seeks
The Ultimate, the One; swart Egypt gives
The Nile to him, her God, Unfolder of Grain.
Brave, seeking Thales . . hail! While from the Peaks,
Obscure, we view thee loftily, sans stain
Truth slides like water through our shallow sieves.

"THE LAST TOKEN"

(For a picture by Gabriel Max.)

Robed in pure white for sacrifice she stands
Mute, by the bleak grey wall, a child in years,
In purity a child; little she fears
Death, little loves the remnant of life's sands.
Her eyes glow inward with pure vision, no bands

Fetter the innocent spirit; with worshipping ears
She hearkens, and a faint new music she hears
Stirs in her prayer . . . she prays with worshipping hands.

Crept to her feet a tiger slavers and fawns
Stung not to hasty carnage; unseen her foes
Peer down from echoing heights on her: she smiles,
Humanly now, snatched from immaculate isles,
As for an instant on her sight Love dawns
Fluttering the fallen tribute of a rose.

THE DELPHIC SYBIL

(*Michelangelo*)

Thine eyes! they see not. If Thou look'st aside
Tis that a *Thought* hath wrenched Thee from the scroll,
Tis that an *Intuition* smites thy soul
Even through the armor of its ancient pride.
Mortal Thou art not, else Thou must have died
When the *Thought* stabbed; but thine unmatched control,
Thy quenchless calm yet gird Thee, as the cowl
Girdles thy brows. Being mortal Thou hadst cried,
Cried vehemently in pain — hadst fallen! But *Thou* . .
Thine eyes are veiled and sad; thy lips express
The Olympian counterpart of wistfulness:
For the *Thought* chains Thee, tho' it cannot bow
The twilight splendor of thy mournful brow,
Nor, tho' it torture, make thy beauty less.

GIORGIONE TO HIS MISTRESS

My brothers praise you with their brushes; I
Would filch no molten metal from your hair,
To dull on leaden canvas . . . none deny
Your radiance! You are manifestly fair
In the sight of all men, gracious in all turns
Of supple womanhood, complete in all
Mysterious harmonies art's eye discerns,
Whose service unto you's perpetual!
I would not limn your beauty — yet the sea
Yearns to the moon and images its love —
But I would hymn your heart's brave fealty
To one unworthy the least throb thereof:
I would proclaim your steadfastness . . . not
show
The shadow of a splendor all men know!

LOOKING FORWARD

Let us suppose, dear heart, the vagrant years
Have filched youth from us, and the promises
Of youth; let us look forward, you and I,
To that hour (not too distant) when our hands
Must part, our eyes *must* sever images
So long, so mutually inwrought . . ah, then,
Best, lovingest, what message shall our hearts
Speak out of silence to the God of Love?

I dare not answer who have dared to ask.

CYPSELUS

In Corinth once men feared the God, and heard
With ears of reverent faith the Pythian word.
And thus the God: "Lo, ye who rule, beware!
Lest evil follow evil, and the fair

City of Corinth fall a tyrant's prey.
For know ye not Eetion? Even to-day
Homeward he leads the dove-eyed Labda, one
Whom Corinth fears not . . yet shall fear her son."
And they who ruled, being wise, interpreted
The Oracle: "Shall Corinth fear the *dead?*"

A twelvemonth passed. To Eetion's hearth there came
Welcomed, a stranger, Cypselus by name —
First born of Labda. Beautiful was the child,
And when the gentle Labda smiled, it smiled
Vacantly as a baby will; no less
Dumb smiles repay a mother's tenderness.
But proud Eetion told the thing abroad,
And the wise Rulers marked the thing; they nod
One to another. Too soon the hour is set.

Ah meek-eyed Labda, in how cruel a net
Art thou imprisoned, witless of all ill!

The house of Eetion stood beneath a hill
Some furlongs from the city gates. Each day
Up to the clamorous mart he took his way,
Leaving sweet Labda and her late-born son
Alone; — not lonely, for lustral waters run
Close to the cottage door, and olive trees
Silver the neighboring hill-sides, and the bees
Hum at their honeyed toil a song of plenteous peace.

But those who rule must seek the general good:
The God had spoken . . .
When the Rulers stood
In gentle Labda's presence, one who knew
And dreaded the black deed he had to do,
Spoke softly in this fashion: "Lo, we come

Even thus far, for Rumor is not dumb,
To see thy little Cypselus; men say
So goodly a man-child hath not graced the day
Since the old age of Heroes!" Labda smiled,
Rich in contentment, and took up the child
From out the cradle where it lay asleep.

Then the stern Rulers let compassion leap
Into their breasts, and he who first had spoke
Took from its mother's arms the babe, that woke
Wondering, sleepy-eyed, all unafraid.
But the ten Rulers trembled, sore dismayed
To think so lovely a man-child must be slain;
Nor could they see in him proud Corinth's bane,
Being so small and tender. And he who first
Held in his arms the baby, clucked and nursed
The tiny fellow . . he who had thought to slay
A fated tyrant, dashing its brains away
On the stone lintels of Eetion's door! . .
And happy Cypselus smiled. Too hard before
Had seemed the needful slaughter; now at last
The purpose failed. From arm to arm slow passed
Cypselus the babe, still smiling, down the line
Of dim-eyed Rulers; nor did any sign,
Thunder or flight of birds, recall the doom.

But when the aged Rulers left the room,
Then dove-eyed Labda placed young Cypselus
In the deep cradle, and an ominous
Dread smote upon her, and she wept, nor knew
What devious paths the hooded Fates pursue
Lest man outwit them and their puissance fail.

Safe in the cradle slept proud Corinth's bale,
The tyrant Cypselus! . . an innocent child
Who dreamed not death forsook him when he smiled.

FRAGMENT OF AN "ELECTRA"

Electra

The curse destroys too slowly. Lo, the Gods
Couch on Olympus and forget.

Chorus

The Gods
Forget not when forgotten. Have a care!

Electra

They sleep. I fear them not. Too long I feared
Their somnolent puissance. Now I know
My father's death is naught to the high Gods.

Chorus

Speak warily, O maiden! All too fast
Fly the flame-wingèd messengers of the Gods.

Electra

Ay, let them flash to the dull ear of Zeus
That the too-long-awaited vengeance fall!
Tho' I too perish, sweet would be that doom.

Chorus

Rashly the word is spoken . .

Electra

Nor unsaid!
I am no mocker of the most high Gods,
Who feel their pitiless mockery. Shall I fear
Death, who desire death only? Death for her

Whose axe smote out my father's strength, ay death,
Death for him also for whose sake he died,
Aegisthus! Death! Ay, and for me this boon!

Chorus

These words are madness!

Electra

Like the Pythian word
Hot from the depth of nature's wounded heart!
Not lightly spoken from false or prattling lips.
I speak the thing I feel; I speak but when
I must — brief speech! Full soon in many words
The soft lie nestles blindly . . .

Chorus

Ay yet, ah yet
Thy words like adders fall upon thy bosom
And sting thee only. Let silence strangle them.

Electra

Thus, then, with patient servitude ye bid
Me wear my days out, sad, unhusbanded,
Uncomforted of children!
Yet *he* comes,
The dream proclaims his coming! He, my brother,
Exiled from out my care! Orestes comes,
And with his coming, lo, the day of anguish
For impious lust and unrepented murder!

They sleep, the high Gods sleep . . but in my dream
Orestes came — smote! and the wrathless Gods
Stirred in their pleasant slumbers and awoke,
And snuffed the sacrificial blood, and knew
The relentless doom accomplished while they slept!

Chorus

Yet no dream comes unsent of the high Gods.

. . . . . .

NECESSITY

"Stronger than will or flesh is necessity"
— Ellen Glasgow

If beauty pass — is beauty less?
Does love, tho' brief, lack loveliness?
Who could endure a fixed caress?
Peace! take thy moments, nor repine . . .
As I take mine.

The strong man falls a prey to sly disease,
Sad mothers seek lost babies on their knees,
The winter hardens and the foodless freeze: —
Yet summer somewhere sings amid her trees,
And somewhere life is ease.
Peace fool! thou canst not change it! Pay thy fees
To One who holds the keys.

Lips are red a little while,
What more fleet than frown or smile?
Wilt thou rail for what is lost,
Take the pleasure — curse the cost?

'Tis true that fairest cheeks must fall,
'Tis true none see beyond the wall
Death builds with tireless hands: —
But the wise soul withstands
Despair's inveterate call.
The wise soul faints not tho' in straightening bands . . .
These things are as they must be — that is all.

FAITH

Faith was a block of marble, formless, white,
Till wrought by nations to the idol — Truth;
And each succeeding nation claims the right
To chip the splendid image without ruth:
Thus, day by day, scarred by the hopes and fears
Of man, the idol scales and disappears.
Faith flakes to dust; but Truth, whose image falls,
Needs neither eidolons nor pedestals.

ST. BERNARD'S PRAYER TO THE VIRGIN

(Paradiso XXXIII)

Virgin and mother, daughter of thine own son,
Both low and high passing all creature else;
Fixed goal of the Eternal, faultless one
In whom our human nature so excells
Itself, He scorned not, He who fashioned it,
To be so fashioned, in Whom all Nature dwells.
In thy pure womb that love again was lit
Whose warmth in lasting peace evolved this flower.
Here unto us thy noonday grace no whit

Is lessened, while below a living shower
Of hope thou flowest to mortals. Lady, thou art
So great and of so infinite a power
That whoso seeketh grace, from thee apart,
Would fly disdaining wings. Thy gentle care
Aideth who asks not solely, but doth start
Oftentimes freely forth forerunning prayer.
In thee is pity, in thee is tenderness,
Heaven's majesty in thee, and thou dost wear
Singly the rose of the world's righteousness!

LANDORIAN

Classic Aspasia! When the messenger
Turned swiftly and departed, leaving thus
A letter from thy Pericles — the last;
Came there no ecstasy, no cry of pain,
No beating of the breast, nor on those brows
The signature of unexampled woe?
The Gods are reticent — and thou. Perchance
For one brief, shuddering instant then thou knewest
What thy loved poets meant who sang of love.
Perchance in that brief space their words seemed less
Than one brief sigh, than one pellucid tear.

LINES

After Reading "The Pentameron"

O breath of something from beyond these hills,
Some higher heaven whence the essential sweetness
Comes down to us imperfectly in gusts,
Striking a faintness of pure ecstasy
Through the minutest fibres of our beings!

Such breaths come seldom to the innocent,
How seldom to the worldly! and, alas,
There are who have not known them, nor shall know.
To me one full intoxicating pang,
Whereat my spirit cried out for painful bliss,
Thou hast sent down to me, O Landor, one
For which I thank thee not in words but tears!
For when I read Boccaccio's dream of her,
Mary of Sicily, I seemed to grow
Boccaccio's self, to see her in my dream,
The golden Fiammetta, pliant, serene,
Bearing the equal crystal, and to hear
Her voice awakening slumberous memories
Of youth unsatisfied, till at the last
She leaned to kiss my brow, and her bright hair
Brushed on my cheek . . and she was gone. O Landor,
Whence came this breath from whitherward, for now
I rest as one who has been close to Love,
Only to see the pallid plumes of Peace
Depart, and (turning) find Love too has fled.

NOCTURNE

Here is no sound for comfort, here
A single voice might break the spell
Of silence rendered terrible,
Of silence deepened into fear;
There is no sound of voices here.

Dumb, soulless streets where nothing is
But still, interminable rain,
Where are your gracious folk? The pain
Of loneliness is over this
Immobile place where nothing is.

If anything should turn or pass
Within these unsubstantial ways,
'Twould be the ghost of other days,
A breath still lingering on the glass
Of Time . . or Time himself might pass.

Time, with a finger half upraised
As one who warns, as one who feels
An end of things and blindly steals
Forth from the peril, weak and dazed:
Time . . with a feeble finger raised.

ART FOR THE SOUL'S SAKE

No cunning of mere craft can cozen long
In fresco, bust, or song.

A world may praise, but when the rapture dies
May not the world despise?

Only the master workers shall endure,
Who wrought being sane and sure.

First the deep heart, the athlete mind, and then
The chisel, brush, and pen!

LOST

Deep in the silent hours I sit
Where love's long memories abide;
And yet I have forgotten it,
I have forgotten why she died.

Was it, perhaps, because the earth
Loves not her flowers nor mothers them,
Holding their eyes of little worth,
Mere gewgaws for her garment's hem?

Or was it that she could not find
A stainless air to breathe, or truth
To hearken on the lips of youth,
Nor kindness where few hearts are kind?

Or was it rather that she found
All things imperfect, and her soul
Shrank from the shrill Walpurgis round
Of life and elsewhere softly stole?

For now she walks not in the ways
Her feet a little time made fair,
Nor is her voice heard anywhere
Whose timid accent sweetened praise.

Lost in these arid hours I sit
Where memory's eidolons abide;
Ah yet, I have forgotten it—
I have forgotten why she died.

CIRCE

All men have sung of Circe; most have seen
Her cruel, sensitive lips; her eyes half green,
Half gold, with feline pupils; most have heard
Her sibilant, sly tongue hissing a secret word.
I, too, have spied her where a marble shell
Spilled turquoise water shimmering as it fell
Into a placid pool with lilies strown;
And I have heard the unsyllabled soft moan
Of mating doves steal on my senses where
She lay in treacherous beauty, naked and brown
and lithe
As the lean lovely serpents she let writhe
Under her breasts and through her splendid hair!
No hogs saw I low wallowing in the mire . . .
Only the sluggish snakes about her zone;

And near that forest wherein the stock-doves moan,
Voluptuous leopards yawning with desire.

MARTHA

Age, sharp, unreverend, crowns you as with thorns,
Martha, for you are old, but not in years;
Old in the suffering servitude that blears
The eye, yellows the cheek, and sternly warns
Us, through your presence, of the impatient scorns
Unlovely labor bears you. What hope, what fears
Are yours, Martha? What ache of unshed tears?
What meagre withering spirit that cowers and mourns?

There is a vacant pathos in your stare,
A dreadful fixity of glance, a look
Of passionless and of purposeless control.
Thou, Death! Canst thou erase as from a book
These lines of wonted grief? Canst render fair
The crippled vesture of this crippled soul?

LINES WRITTEN ON THE FLY LEAF THE UNIVERSE"

I questioned my heart, and it said:
By the truth you shall live,
By the truth you shall die!
If you sin there is none to forgive —
Who shall ransom the dead?
In the truth they have died — for a lie.

Though the words of your mouth are as dust
That is blown to and fro
  At the will of the wind,
You shall live, for the truth makes it so,
  You shall die, for you must —
Having suffered the truth, having sinned.

All the truth is just this that you see
Yet see not, being blind,
  Nor endeavor to hear.
What you seek, being true, you shall find;
  Being false, shall you be
Perfected in vision — a seer?

There is nothing afar that the earth
Cannot yield to your quest,
  Cannot serve for your need.
What seek ye on earth — is it rest?
  Or seems labor more worth?
Found your freedom in life on a deed!

Are you tired? You shall sleep having toiled,
And your hands shall be still,
  And your eyes shall be closed:
You are one with the Infinite Will —
  And the truth is not foiled;
Nor the Man, nor the Master deposed.

FORGIVENESS

God hated her! . . . But I — I loved her well.
She had such ways as win upon the heart;
A trick of chiming like a silver bell
Sweet thriftless words that make the pulses start:
A lying favor coaxed from nether Hell,
More like to magic than to mortal art.

God hated her? . . . Perhaps. I only know
Her mouth was quaintly poisoned with a smile.
I but remember that her voice was low,
More honey-thick with passion than with guile.
Can I forgive, if God — ? Ah, be it so!
She will not seem less beautiful the while.

A WORD OF PROTEST

"He should be happy—he has youth, and friends;
High hopes; the world's abundance." Ay, all these
I have, yet am not happy. None who bends
Grave thought to the world's secret ever frees
The burden of unprofitable years
From off his shoulders: for he seeks and sees
The pallid faces and the stained with tears.

There should be none alive whom happiness
Has dwelled with in continuance; for none
Are free to hold their fate aloof and bless
Each cloistered moment with a joy begun.
There should be none alive whom joy can touch
With long completeness, lest one mortal shun
Just deeds that call on pity overmuch.

Youth is not all a blessing, nor are friends
Sure plyers of life's lamp with fragrant oil;
High hopes are masters which some mocker sends
To shame our lives with uneffectual toil.
The world's abundance is but bread and wine;
What more I have a little thought shall spoil
Of any splendor: "Having dined — I dine."

Is this the sum? Not all; for much is here
To wake forbearance and to foster love.
Who worships happiness is not the seer:
Life's hand is naked; happiness, a glove.
Let men look forth with sobered eyes and know
What lacks to all men they were boasting of:
Joy! — that of all things is the first to go.

MILICENT AND MIRABELLA

An Interlude

TO F. C.

"If you will sing, let it be cheerily
Of dallying love. There's many a one among you
Hath sung, beneath our oak trees to his maiden,
Light bird-like mockeries fit for love in spring time.
Sing such a one."

T. L. Beddoes.

SCENE FIRST

THE TOWER

Milicent, *gravely*

So now *I* have a lover . .

Mirabella, *fingers her lute*

O, play upon him!
Give me a lover, give me a pretty lover,
And of his sighs I'll weave me harmonies
More various and delightful than these fingers
Have won me ever from lute or clavichord.
I love a pretty lover!

Milicent

Hush, Mirabella,
Lest Cupid hear you mock him and undo you.
— If you should love in earnest!

Mirabella

Love is but play.
You know, Milicent, how the stories tell
Of blue eyed Princes and the like: it may be
Such Princes lived, slew dragons, and were slain
To win one eye-beam from their ladies' eyes . .
I say it may be, Milicent.

Milicent

Why, truly,
Florio swore if I gainsaid his love
He would rip up his bosom to reveal
The image cherished there — a cruel mistress.
But I believed him not.

Mirabella

Love is but play:
A few stray glances, a smile, a tearful face
Kissed into silence underneath the moon,
And then the bubble quavers — vanishes;
The dream is ended. I have known such dreams.
— So Florio loves you?

Milicent

Dotingly!

Mirabella

Poor fellow!
— And now I grieve for him, I'll shed one tear
For Vivian — Vivian's a perfect lover:
Too earnest though, and just a little bit
Conventional in manner. Why, think, Milicent,

By day he haunts the loneliest corridors,
Mocking his love with shadows; by night he climbs
Up through the ivy to my window lattice
And sings me gently into sleep; but then,
So one has told me, he wanders madly forth
Along far meadows calling to the moon.
I must speak kindlier to him; I fear he grows
A shade too thin for beauty. But O, Milicent,
I shall grow tired of him — he's melancholy!
No fire, no rapid jest! Your Florio
Seems livelier — keep him so. These silent lovers
Look miserably well in tapestry,
But make one yawn (a little) while on duty.

Milicent

Nay, but you're wrong there! Florio's much too flippant.
I had grown tired of *him* before I knew
He loved me. Tell me, pray, if any lover,
Famed in a song, went ever laughing forth
From the immediate presence of his love?
'Tis Florio's way! He loves me and he laughs —
At me? — I've sealed your lips. Not that I fear them.
But he's too fat, and eats — come, Mirabella,
What think you of my Florio, my loverling,
Grown plump on four good meals a day?

Mirabella

— A trade!
Florio for Vivian — Vivian for Florio!

L OF C

Milicent

What do you mean?

Mirabella

A trade! A trade! A trade!
I am in love with smiling; I'll no more
Of Vivian! Florio beckons me!

Milicent

But how — ?

Mirabella

Are you agreed? I'll find the way.

Milicent

Agreed!
Romance for raillery!

Mirabella

Wit for a sheaf of ballads!

Milicent

Vivian!

Mirabella

Florio!

A tapestry is lifted. Enter Florio and Vivian.

Vivian and Florio, *bowing*

Ladies, at your service!

Milicent, *apart to Mirabella*

What have they heard?

Mirabella, *apart to Milicent*

Their names: they came but now
And entered with their names. — Ah, Vivian,
You heard us call?

Vivian

I heard you, Mirabella.

Mirabella

Come, then, and sit beside me.

(*apart to Milicent*)

— Tell Florio
To meet you by the cypress with the moon;
Hush, go to him — I'll to you presently . .

(*to Vivian, who reclines himself at her feet*)

My gentle Vivian!

Florio, *to Milicent, kissing her hand*

My sweet Milicent!

SCENE SECOND
THE FOREST GLADE

The Lover, *without, sings*

Merrily, merrily sang the birds,
Merrily too sang I;
My song was all of joyous words
As Annabelle sped by;
My song was all of joyous words,
They seemed to soar and fly!
Merrily, merrily sang the birds —
Love is not born to die.

Bitterly, bitterly sang the wind,
Bitterly too sang I;
My song was of a maid that sinned
When summer's tide ran high.
My song was of a maid that sinned,
It sounded like a cry!
Bitterly, bitterly sang the wind —
Love is not born to die.

Enter The Lover.

The Lover

Well, lady Owl, how goes the world with you?
Blindly? A truthful answer. — And with me?
— Blindly . . . I'd tell you of a certain fellow
Who loved a lady, beautiful enough,
With tender eyes and a most servile hand
That fawned caressingly upon his shoulder
When he lay at her feet, as it would say —
"I know you love me and am not afraid."
He loved her, lady Owl, after his fashion
Some twenty months, and then . . .

Fa, la! She is flown,
Clumsily! — Nay, I'll sing to myself: 'tis better
To sing than weep. Heigh ho! How runs the ballad?

Within a deadly forest
Wandered a barren fool;
His head was heavy,
His head was heavy
As the lily's by the pool.

He sighed and then he whispered
A name of mystery:
'Twas Annabella,
'Twas Annabella
He whispered dolefully.

His cap and bells were lacking,
His eyes were grey with tears;
And O the groaning,
And O the groaning
This deadly forest hears!

Meantime within the palace
Lightly a maiden sang —
A truce to folly,
A truce to folly,
Let lovers all go hang!

Scurvily sung! A double truce to folly!
I'll seek my lady Owl; she comforts me.

As he passes out, enter Vivian and Florio, muffled.

Florio

So! we have learned a lesson. Now to teach one!
Be round with her, and let each word, a jibe,
Stick in her heart.

Vivian

And do not you forget
To wear a vizard of love melancholy,
Putting forth sighs as the quick earth in Spring
Breathes out in violets.

Florio

O trust me, brother!
I will exhale a very weeping humor,
Talk little, and that little of the moon.
— Think you we shall deceive them?

Vivian

Cunningly!
We are twinned in height, and for my girth this cloak
Will add a roundness to my sparer figure.
Then they who plan deceit suspect none.

Florio

Truth!

But for our voices we were safe . .

Vivian

Fear nothing.
I'll ape your tones, whilst you, the silent lover,
Speaking but seldom shun discovery.
Look you, the moon! I'll to my place.

Florio

And I,
Loosening the girdle of false grief, to mine.

Exeunt severally. The glade brightens. Enter Milicent and Mirabella.

Mirabella

Alack, you have spoiled the rarest fun to-night!

Milicent

Alas, I am a coward, Mirabella!

Mirabella

For the last time, will you not change with me,
Milicent? All goes smoothly, and see! the moon
Marks the self hour we purposed for our jest.

Milicent

Ah, no — I dare not. I'll not act this part,
Like lovers tangled in a comedy,
Lest laughter end in tears.

Mirabella

You will desert me?

Milicent

I must . .

Mirabella

Put we our masks on. O, Milicent,
If you would hold our bargain! But Florio —
You cannot part with Florio? You love him?

Nay, if your heart sets like a silly shallop
Straight to the port of marriage, I'll not blow
Cross winds . . Farewell.

Milicent

Forgive me, Mirabella . .

Mirabella

Poor child, you love him; you are in the dream.
Go to him by the cypress. Vivian
Shall weep my disappointment with his tears.

Milicent, *aside, going*

And yet I think you love him . .
Fare you well.

Exeunt. The Lover, without, sings

Once a lover loved a lass
In spring's dreamy weather
(Every lover is an ass!),
And they sighed together.

All day long he told her tales
Of the fires that burned him
(Love's the fire that soonest pales!),
Till the maiden spurned him.

Enter Mirabella and Florio, both masked.

Then all night he cursed her eyes,
Killing with unkindness
(Every lover all but dies!),
Then he cursed love's blindness.

And the maiden shed a tear,
Only one for sorrow:
(Love's a truant, that is clear;
He'll fly home to-morrow!)

Mirabella, *wearily*

— Vivian, what song was that?
It came from out the bosom of the wood
Mockingly, like the sigh of false despair.

Florio, *aside*

By all the tricksy gods! I know that voice:
It is not hers I love . . Well, Vivian,
I'll play your part, but to another purpose:
You may have cause to thank me.

Mirabella

Sir Tragedy!
Why do you mutter? Have you no friendlier tongue?

Florio

None, Mirabella.

Mirabella, *aside*

— Cold, cold: shall Vivian change?

Florio, *sighs deeply*

Woe's me, I do not love you, Mirabella.

(*aside*)

Now God requite the truth of this!

Mirabella

What Vivian,
Have you forgot your vows? Dare you speak this?
You do not love me — *you?* O you have sworn
Your soul away in lover's oaths!

Florio

False vows
Weigh down the heart!

Mirabella

Ah, now I know false vows
Lie ever on men's lips! . . In very truth,
Do you not love me?

Enter Vivian, humming gaily, followed by Milicent. Both are masked.

Florio, *draws Mirabella aside*

Hist — see! Stand we apart
And listen . . .

Vivian, *dancing forward*

Come, lady, come! The world's in masquerade,
And Love leads all the revels! Cheerly, cheerly!
How now! Look up! Lilt at the winking stars
Who hold love's folly but a thing of air,
Fantastically mirthful! Come, let's kiss,
And wind a mutual galliard down the glade!
I hold these weeping lovers as mere fools!
Life's but an instant, love a part of it —

A pity then to spend that part in tears!
Sing me a virelay!

Milicent, *aside*

Why, this is Vivian,
Playing a sorry masque. He does not know me.
Gently! — I'll humor him . .
Dear Florio,
I love you well — you have a smiling heart!

(*aside*)

And so I do.

Vivian, *aside*

She loves him well . .

(*wildly*)

— O, then
I'll play a part no more! Go, seek your love!
Look, Mirabella!

(*unmasks suddenly*)

Milicent, *unmasks*

But where is Mirabella?

Vivian

Milicent! . . Where indeed?

Mirabella, *comes from the shadow*

Here, Vivian!
O, I have been deceived — I hate . .

Vivian, *takes her in his arms*

Not so —
You love me, Mirabella.

Milicent

Where's Florio?

Florio, *steps forward*

Here at your side, Milicent. — Mirabella,
Will you forgive me that I did not love you?

Mirabella

Graciously . .

Milicent, *to Vivian*

And, sir clown, will you forgive me
That I loved Florio?

Vivian

With all my heart!

Florio, *to Milicent*

Then join we our twain pardons in a kiss!

Milicent, *prevents him*

First say how came this coil!

Florio

Ask Vivian!

Vivian

Nay, I'll not tell you! Question Florio . .

Florio

Explain this, Milicent . .

Milicent

See, Mirabella,
The knot is in your hand — pull at the cord!

Mirabella

Let this knot hold unravelled; its fateful thread
Binds up our hearts.

Florio, *kisses Milicent*

Gladly, we are content.

They pass without. Enter The Lover, singing.

The Lover

Anywhere for love, say I,
  Anywhere for love;
On the earth, or in the earth,
  Or up the sky above!

Once I loved a lily girl
  On the earth so green,
Once I loved a lily girl,
  Fairer never seen.

But they laid my lily girl
In the earth so brown,
And I sought my lily girl
Where the sun goes down.

If I find my lily girl
Up the sky so blue,
There I'll love my lily girl
While the stars shine through.

Anywhere for love, say I,
Anywhere for love;
On the earth, or in the earth,
Or up the sky above.

As the song concludes he loiters slowly from the glade and is lost to view.

NOW HERE ENDS
MILICENT AND MIRABELLA
AN INTERLUDE

"Leaf after leaf, like a magician's book."

FROM THE BOOK OF YOUTH

Stray Leaves and Notes i' the Margin

. . . . Once upon a time there was a beautiful island, midway the North and the South. On this island lived an old old man, of reverend seeming, famous for magical arts and darker wisdom.

Now one day a maiden, very tender in the eyes and lips, came to him, speaking thus:

"O father, for some little flight of years have I wandered hither and thither in a fair bramble garden, though not of my own accord. Roses are in the garden, many petalled, blood red in color, and so plentiful that an hundred might be taken and no loss perceived. Of these, dear father, I am desirous of gathering to myself a garland, but fear to do so lest my hands be torn by their sharp and envenomed thorns."

Little is recorded of the sage's counsel to the maiden; but on the page where this simple tale stands written is a picture quaintly illuminated with purple and crimson and burnished gold. It presents an old reverend man leading a maiden by the hand down a path bordered with rose bushes in abundant bloom. The roses are one and all the color of blood.

A smile of wonderful sweetness lightens the old man's face, like sunshine on still water. The maiden's bearing is melancholy; she steps slowly on, and her eyes follow the path before her. And one other thing in this little picture is very singular; with her disengaged hand the maiden press-

es several withered roses to her heart. Many petals have fallen from her fingers by the way, and one is cunningly limned as fluttering down across the hem of her robe like a fleck of blood.

This picture seems in some sort to complete the tale in the rubric, and one might take the whole for an allegory, if it were not written for a fact. It is strange, however, that so wise an old man is shown to us smiling in the garden, and that the artist gives to the maiden — who is said to have been worshipfully fair — downcast eyes and reluctant moving feet. But the roses are well colored, and the fallen petals crumpled and curled with unerring craft. For were they not pressed to the heart of the maiden? . . . and rose petals are ever delicate and perishable.

No less it would be very sad to see them fallen along the path if there were not so many roses in the garden.

I

No question; youth is past.
The scornful hours have buried him at last.

What has youth left behind?
Only these scattered leaves for age to bind.

Is it worth while? Who knows?
In youth we dare to dally with the rose.

Peace; read youth's song with tears . . .
Persistent fragrance sweetening the years

Youth dying leaves to age.
Is it enough? Ah, gently — turn the page.

II

YOUTH'S NOCTURNE

Dear heart, the light of heaven is in your face,
Lending your smile a grace, a witchery
Beyond earth's minstrelsy.

Pale moonwaifs waken in the trees
Unnumbered mysteries, and in your eyes
Delicate dreams arise.

Quaint forms of insubstantial things
Weave silver-silken rings, within the leaves
Something there is that grieves.

Charmed silence else is over us;
Forgot the fume and fuss of mortal tongue,
Forgot the song unsung.

Remembered only eyes are blue,
Made piteous with the dew that love distills
Against our trancéd wills —

What time the moon spins through the night
Her manifold web of light, to tangle all
Hearkening love's perilous call.

(Love's perilous call, remote, forlorn,
A rueful elfin horn breathing apart
How lonely is the heart.)

O pensive wondernight, with tears
The mute reproachful years will blot, men say,
Your moon, will steal away

The passion and the terror and
The dream that might not stand for daytime truth
Stirred in the heart of youth.

— Sweetheart, the light of heaven is in your face,
Lending your smile a grace, a fantasy
Beyond earth's melody.

III

SONG

If I tell you life is sad, love,
Will you answer love is sweet?
Ah, but think of those who had love
But to lose it, cruel mad love —
Swift as flame and sharp as sleet!

If I tell you love is sweet, dear,
Will you answer life is sad;

While the nimble minutes fleet, dear,
Banished kisses — is it meet, dear?
Kiss me, tell me life is glad.

IV

Life, life within me flowing
A swift elusive fire —
Life, life within me growing
An ultimate desire!

O life, for love, for laughter,
For joy of hurried breath,
Say shall I know thee after —
Strange in the mask of death?

Shall death be as thy brother
Within whose eyes I'll see
The gleam no earth can smother,
The lusty pride of thee?

Or shall I lose thy presence,
The glad prevailing grace
Weft-woven in thine essence
And regnant on thy face?

O life within me glowing
With ever waning fires,
Say whither thou art going,
Whither my lost desires!

Whither the feet of lasses,
Whither the daisy train,
Each maiden as the grass is,
And graceful as the grain;

Whither the eyes now tearless,
Once tenderest of blue,
Whither the hearts now fearless,
Once fearful unto you —

Whither the song, and whither
The singer's pregnant tongue!
For wilding flower-folk wither
And only youth is young:

And the lust of love and laughter
And the joy of hurried breath
Are gone with youth, and after
Life's carnival comes death.

V

LUTE SONG FOR . . . . .

Look into her eyes and see
They are kind but cold to thee.

When I look into her eyes
Sad unnumbered things arise
Like a mist between us twain —
Love, the poet, dreams again.

Touch her hand to strangely feel
Holy things within you kneel.

When I take her hand in mine
Like a perfume born of wine
Comes the pageant o'er my brain —
Love, the poet, dreams again.

VI

AVANT AVRIL

You ask a song, Claudette?
I dare not; I
Am frozen in winter's net,
Too numb to fly!

I must have room for song,
Earth, air, and sea,
To riot, to scud along . .
Song's soul is free!

I cannot sing for you
As I would sing,
Till the domed sky be blue,
Till I can fling

My body on ripe grass,
Or run at will
Where harlequin shadows pass
Over the hill!

I cannot rhyme today
Pent within walls,
My dreams are stiffened clay,
No pulse recalls

The rhythms of the spring!
Alas, Claudette,
When the hour bids me sing —
Will *you* forget?

VII

Some love lasses for loveliness,
And 'tis a desirable quality;
Some love 'em for fortune, and some for dress,
And some for flaring frivolity:
But the lass I love, O the lovely lass
Gives little heed to her looking-glass!
She tilts her head with a shy surprise
And lights me the living smile of her eyes!

The earth they say is a cooling star,
And love, says the Cynic, irrational;
But be you in Dublin or Malabar
'Tis a failing you'll find is national:
And the lass I love, O the lovely lass
Gives little heed to the bray of an ass;
She tilts her head with a sweet surprise
And lights me the living love in her eyes!

VIII

OYEZ! OYEZ!

If any anywhither in any ambuscade
Can wing the wingèd felon by whom I was way-laid,
Tie, tie his wings together, transfix him with his dart,
And bring me home a feather dyed red from Love's own heart!

Such verses it will write
Shall turn my mistress to me,
Whose glance is living light
Sharp-piercing through and through me.

I'll set it in my cap
  Where she may look upon it
And weep Love's heavy hap —
  Who mocks my lightest sonnet!

Ah, hurry, hurry hence, sirs, hale him hither privily;
I will repay his capture, who late hath captured me: —
And yet he comes so comely — nay, prithee, *set him free!*

IX

Flower, fairy flower,
Deep in your breast
Is there a heart,
Flower, fairy flower?

Thus in the west
Forth from the clouds
Comes a red stream
Out from the west.

Lo, the flood crowds
Up to your lips,
Wondrously deep —
Pulses and crowds

Till your head dips
Down with the weight,
Languidly fair,
Witchingly dips.

This be your fate
Flower, fairy flower —

Burn by her cheek
(Mine be your fate).

Whisper the hour,
Glow 'neath her lips —
Tell her my love
Flower, fairy flower.

X

To sing of fallen tears is folly.
Be mine a modern lay
Blowing a kiss to melancholy
Just by the way.

For though she seem thus lowly wise,
Clad round with sable gear,
There is a languor in her eyes
That poets fear.

Her lips are close with subtle cunning,
Save when they fold a kiss
On some lad's lips and send him running
To hell for bliss.

Crossed hands are quiet on her breast;
Natheless I doubt the jade
Has felt her bosom madly pressed
By lips betrayed.

Still is she seemly in her view —
Be it enough for me
To toss the wench a kiss or two,
Or maybe three.

XI

Tell the tale and let it pass —
What's the tale when all is told?
Youth is busied with a lass,
Age is wearied with a scold;
Sunshine warms the summer grass,
But the graves beneath are cold.

Tell the tale and let it pass —
Truth's a masquer, that is plain.
(Now a prophet on an ass,
Now a builder up of Spain!)
Sunshine gilds the summer grass,
But the shades beneath remain.

Tell the tale and let it pass —
Where's the wisdom of the rose?
Beauty is not built of brass
But 'tis beauty till it goes.
Smile if sunshine gilds the grass
Since it breaks no long repose.

Tell the tale and let it rest —
True or false what matters it?
Hearts still beat at love's behest;
Sorrow never silenced wit.
If the sunshine serve for test,
Mark the shades where lovers sit.

Tell the tale out and have done —
Weary business this delay!
Youth spins falsehood in the sun;
Age embodies it — in clay.
Anyhow the tale's begun,
Let each babbler have his say.

XII

You do not understand?
— Ah, Gabriel,
I, a poor girl whose body God hath formed
With rare perfection, tender grace of line,
A beauty singular, such as of old
Men carved from marble, or these looser days,
Blending the harmonies of hue and line,
Trace on rude canvas, or on palace walls —
I, Aphrodite, Phryne, at your will
As art or fancy lead you, I (even I,
The perfect shell, the exquisite frame of flesh!)
I, even I, have yet a hint of soul.
A something in me not to be repressed,
A passion men call Love . . . . . .
Ah, Gabriel,
You do not, for you will not understand!

XIII

THE IMMUTABLE

I have builded me a woman, fairer none,
I have builded me a woman for my dreams;
From the porches of the palace of the sun
I have stolen fire, and from unearthly streams
The clearness of their waters and the sound
Of their rapids and the coolness of their flow
Have I stolen, and from out the whirling round
Of the Universe such things as poets know:
I have moulded them and made them purely white,
Have fashioned them in likeness of a maid
To whom the clear of heaven were perfect night,

Within whose eyes such night were scarce a shade;
In likeness of a maid, but on her breast
Where snow might rest unheeded, by my art
(That none shall hope) have I made manifest
The single passion of a bloodless heart.

XIV

LYRIC WAYFARING—

A Prologue For Summer

Song, if I shall give you speed,
Speed and strength to my desire,
Go you forth along the mede
Where lithe timothy's aswing,
Go you forth a simple thing
Clothed with rapture as with fire.

Learn of all the wilding ways
Thriftless secrets known to them,
Learn the lore of summer days,
Lore of leaf and bud and stem,
Learn to praise the things they praise
Weaving beauty for content's
Coronal or diadem.

Mysteries the elements
Of a final mystery!

Song, go forth and touch the quick
Soul of things (I ask no more)
Where the sun sheds soft and thick
Sudden things that scoot and flee

All along the earthen floor;
Song go forth (I ask no more)
Where the flower-folk are fair,
Whisper them I love the sheen
Of their incense strewing hair;
Tell them (sighing) of the green
Waves that lap the golden stair
When close shadows mass and pore
Round the palace of the air —
When the sun is made aware . . .

(*Whisper low — and further spare.*)

Further spare, but bring to me
Something of unheedful glee,
Something of the innocence
Ignorant of time's events
Haply you have gathered there.

XV

I ask no blessing on my life
  Thrice blessed with song;
I only ask a country lane
  To sing along.

A country lane with frequent grass
  And wayside flowers,
A little lazy lane for ease
  Of quiet hours.

A lane that leads beneath close trees
  To some sly nook
With moss and ferns that bend anear
  A shallow brook.

Here leave me for a singing space
  Where nothing is
Unmusical, a wayfellow
  Content with this!

Glad of the cool prevailing shade
  No contrast mars,
Glad of the gradual dusk of things,
  Glad of the stars

When stealthy night is round about
  My woodland eaves
With whisperings and tuneless thrills
  Midway the leaves.

Here leave me with forgetfulness
  A little time,
And I will give you from my store
  A restful rhyme.

XVI

Julia's laugh is like a river,
Deep and calm and true —
Flashing sometimes in a shallow,
Glinting sometimes with a shiver,
Glassy smooth where fields lie fallow —
Bringing gladness home to you.

XVII

TO PHYLLIS

Phyllis, O Phyllis of the many rhymes,
  Were you indeed so fair, dear?
Your poet lovers all unnumbered times
  Deem you beyond compare, dear:

Was there not one who turned from you to smile
Upon some other girl a straying while?

Were your eyes ever star-like, ever bright,
Did never tears invade them?
And those trim lips like cherries, did no blight
Of unkissed kisses fade them?
Within your cheeks were there forever blent
Roses and lilies for love's wonderment?

You have been shepherdess and won the heart
Of many a foolish Thyrsis,
Who cherished close love's elemental smart
And wrought it out in verses;
And you have been the supersubtle dream
Of fettered idlers by a fettered stream.

— And now? Nay, it is good to worship air
If solid matter fail us!
The scantest poet hath some love to spare
For love; — when doubts assail us
Phyllis, we turn to you and find at last
Our golden age linked with a golden past.

O Phyllis, Phyllis of the many songs,
Are you still blithe to-day, dear?
Shall wilful Gretchen suffer all the wrongs
And you not have to pay, dear,
For any little slip . . . forgive me, please —
No Phyllis ever made such slips as these.

Well then, I too must praise you if indeed
Earth may not dim your beauty;
To praise perfection is a poet's creed,
To slave for it his duty.
Your simple duty, Phyllis, is to be
Some poet's symbol through eternity.

XVIII

Love has passed me by;
But I know a face
Whose diviner eye
Love's self well might grace.
Love has passed me by.

Love has passed me by;
But a voice I hear
Sweeter than love's sigh,
Truer than love's tear.
Love has passed me by.

Love has passed me by;
But the face I see
Fades not though the sky
Darken over me.
Love has passed me by.

Love has passed me by;
But a voice still sings
Tender words that fly
Thick like shadowings.
Love has passed me by.

Love has passed me by
Working not his will,
Though one hover nigh —
Beauty's self. Ah, still
Love has passed me by.

XIX

Dream? Do I dream because the masque of life
Lives ever in my thoughts? Because I see
Now clearly, now as some far mystery
Unresting phantasies of hope and strife?

Is it to dream, idly, if like a knife
Stabbing, some woman's anguish sever me
From all save pity? — to dream, when piteously
Come comfortable gleams of babe and wife?

Nay, then, I dream! Not gladly, nor as one
Who broods above the mutable masquerade
Wearily, wearily . . .not as these I dream.

But as a boy, musing by some wished stream,
Loiters, now deep in shade and now in sun,
Even so I dreaming lapse from sun to shade.

XX

Let the rose fall, I care not,
And let youth pass,
Since she I love can spare not
Her image from the glass
To glad mine eyes.

Let beauty fade, let pleasure
Link hands with pain;
My love hath now no leisure
To love my love, disdain
Sits in her eyes.

But O, let not her vision
Fail from my ken!

Now my love gives derision,
Frankly she gave me then
Love from her eyes.

And in remembered glances
I take my bliss
(Freed from love's blinder chances),
Each memory like a kiss
Sealing mine eyes.

XXI

My muse is wilder
  Than any brook,
Scarce I beguiled her;
  My hand she took

As one who trembles
  Lest for her wrong
False love dissembles
  His heart in song.

Truth I dissembled,
  Meaning to keep
(What though she trembled!)
  Her fears asleep.

But she eludes me
  Shy to the end;
Too fierce her moods be
  Ever to mend.

No safe empiric,
  She foams along
Plunged in a lyric —
  Drowned in a song!

VALE

Songs of my youth, go, beard the world,
  Seek for yourselves new masters!
What force have wings for ever furled . .
  What strength who shun disasters?

Go forth, and fight alone; farewell!
  No more my cares attend you;
Though children of my thought, the spell
  That formed cannot befriend you.

Henceforth we travel alien ways,
  Firm in despite of sorrow:
He only sings of yesterdays
  Who dare not face to-morrow.

JUN 12 1906

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 015 907 171 6